

ABC

HISTORY, SCIENCE AND THE BIBLE

BY BAHATI INNOCENT



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By Elder Bahati Innocent

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Dedicated to

All the people in search for the message of truth from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

PREFACE

In this age of modern science, the harmonious intersection between the avenues of scientific disciplines, history and Bible chronology is to be studied and their interaction fully explored. Different worldviews have inevitably been seen in our interactions with people from various cultures and some endorsed by many governments worldwide.

How can we fully understand the interdisciplinary connections between history, science and biblical theology and ultimately their implications on our way of life? To answer this question, we need to dive into the depths of their interconnection to unravel the mysteries of the universe through the lens of science, history and the Bible. Also, as you read this book you should ask yourself this question, “Should there be a conflict between science and the Bible?”

There is much debate in our world today between science and the Bible. Others suggest that science should drive our understanding of religion. Still others argue that religion should drive our scientific understanding. There are truly deep divisions in many senses as people claim different sources of authority on these issues.

But there are many contrasting ideas that are presented in the popular discussions of this topic that need to be carefully considered. Words have meanings, and we need to make sure that we are using our own words in a manner that is clear and does not hide or change the meaning of certain terms and concepts. We all recognize when a politician talks out of both sides of his mouth, but it can be a little harder to spot when we see religious leaders and scientists talking in the same manner. While we can learn from those who have studied various ideas, we need to be careful not to accept those ideas just because some scientist, religious leader, or news analyst says something is so.

Everyone has a point he or she is trying to make. Many people will try to tell you that they do not have such biases, but it is impossible to stay neutral: our thinking always begins from a specific starting point. All of the arguments that we make are based on our worldview, and our worldview is based on specific assumptions we believe to be true. The goal of this book is to explore some of those underlying assumptions about science, world history and the Bible, and their implications for the arguments that are often used in the broad worldview debates such as the creation-evolution debate.

Tragically, there has been much misreporting about the historical relationship between Christianity and science. Thus it is necessary to refute some powerful yet untrue myths that have caused some to wrongly see Christianity as suppressing the truth while science pursues it. As we continue to pursue scientific understanding about the universe we live in, let us do so by building on the firm foundation of what God has revealed to us in His Word. The God who has revealed Himself to us in the Bible makes science possible. Let God be true and every man a liar.

INTRODUCTION

Part One: The Importance of History

History is the continuous, systematic narrative of past events as relating to a particular group of people, country or period. It provides a chronological, statistical, and cultural record of the events, people, and movements that have made an impact on humankind and the world at large throughout the ages.

Why is the study of history important? It's the old maxim, whether it's church history or other history: those who refuse to study history are doomed to repeat it. Virtually every heresy we face today is a rehash of some heresy that the church has already had to deal with in history. God has preserved his church through all the centuries, and we hope that by now we have learned something. One of the great weaknesses of the contemporary church is its detachment from its own history. As Christians, we ought to study history as it gives us a purpose. History gives us hope. History gives us theological grounding. But as much as anything, history reminds us that we live in the shadow of those who have come before and that those who follow will, in turn, look back to us.

Part Two: History and Bible Chronology

The Bible provides a reliable history of the universe and the events described in the Bible, particularly in the early chapters of Genesis, providing a framework through which we can interpret science and history. The age of the earth is one of the most contentious issues in the creation/evolution debate. In today's culture, the thought of creation occurring about 6000 years ago is frequently mocked by non-Christians — and also many professing Christians. This book outlines the differences between empirical and historical science, how predictions can be helpful in the sciences, and how worldview affects our perspective about the past.

Part Three: The Elements of Chronology

I. INTRODUCTION

The harmony of the time statements in the Scripture strengthens our confidence in the accuracy of the inspired Word, but chronology is not essential to salvation. That is evidently why God did not see fit to fill in all the details of chronology. There are some points left open for personal opinion as to the exact dating, and different writers among us have at various times used differing dates. This is not to say that historical dates do not help us sometimes in our search for deeper spiritual truth, or that those few connected with exact prophetic periods are unimportant; but prophetic landmarks are well established, and other historical dates are rarely questions of theological importance. To dogmatize on chronology, or to attempt to fix every date once and for all, would be not only presumptuous but impossible. This introductory section, and the following ones in succeeding chapters, will endeavor to provide a general outline and to explain certain basic principles. Many supposed difficulties have been cleared up by increasing knowledge of ancient chronology. Although we cannot expect all authorities to agree in their interpretation of the incomplete facts of ancient times, we can confidently expect future research to strengthen the Bible record. Wherever this record can be adequately tested, it stands revealed as trustworthy history. Its time statements are not haphazard or fanciful, but harmonious and reasonable.

II. TIME MEASURED BY HEAVENLY BODIES

When God set this globe spinning on its axis and sent it on its yearly course around the sun, accompanied by its smaller attendant, the moon, He decreed that these heavenly bodies should govern the earth's day and night, and, further, that they should be "for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years" (Genesis 1:14). Thus time is measured for the earth by these motions. The ancients watched the skies for signs and seasons, for the time of day, and for the beginning of the month. Today the astronomers in the great observatories train their telescopes on the stars to regulate the time signals that set our clocks.

The Day Measured by the Earth's rotation - As this planet turns on its own axis, floodlighted by the sun, half the globe is in the light and the other half in the shadow. That is, there is day on one side and night on the other. For "God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night" (Genesis 1:5). As we, on any given spot on this spinning globe, are carried eastward, out of the sunlight and into the shadow, we say that the sun is setting in the west. Then, following our all-night swing around the dark portion, we come again to the light. We see the sun once more at the dividing line that we call sunrise. As our local spot approaches the point directly opposite the sun, that fiery orb appears to rise higher in our sky until it is on our meridian at noon. Then it appears to decline as we move farther around the sunlit side, and we complete one circuit as we again reach the sunset line—the edge of the shadow. The ancients needed no clocks to tell them when they passed the boundary line between day and night—sunrise began the day and sunset ushered in the night.

"Are there not twelve hours in the day?" asked Jesus (John 11:9). And so it was, for in His time an hour meant one twelfth of the interval—varying with the seasons—between sunrise and sunset. But "day" has another meaning also. A period marked off by five days, or any number of days, cannot disregard the intervening nights. Therefore a day in the calendar is measured by one complete rotation of the earth on its axis, including a day and a night. For the Hebrews the starting point was sunset. Each full day ran evening-morning, dark-light, night-day (Leviticus 23:32; 22:6, 7; Mark 1:21, 32). Also certain other ancient peoples, like the Babylonians, began their day at sunset, although the Egyptians counted from sunrise. Our modern midnight-to-midnight reckoning came from the Romans.

The Month Governed by the Moon - Just as one complete rotation of the globe on its axis, from sunset on to sunset again, marks off one day on this earth, so the time required for the moon to go once around the earth—that is, to pass through its visible phases, as from crescent to full moon and to crescent again—constituted the original month. The ancient lunar month did not begin at the astronomical new moon, when that body stands between the earth and the sun—with its unlighted side toward us, and hence invisible—but one or more days later, with the appearance of the new crescent. Now, however, most of the world uses artificial calendar months that disregard the moon.

The Year Measured by the Sun - As our spinning earth, circled continuously by the moon, traverses its vast course around the sun, it makes the circuit of the four seasonal landmarks—the summer and winter solstices and the spring and autumnal equinoxes—to complete what we call a year. These points do not mark off the year as visibly as the moon does the lunar month, yet even relatively primitive peoples can recognize them by repeated observation of the shadows cast by the sun at rising, setting, and noon throughout the year. At the summer and winter solstices occur the days of longest and shortest sunlight,

when the sun is seen farthest north and farthest south in the sky; at the spring and fall equinoxes, when day and night over the whole globe are equal, the sun rises directly in the east and sets directly in the west. And despite the difficulty in determining the precise length of the year, the veriest savage can tell its passage by the cycle of the seasons, marked by unmistakable signs.

The Week not Marked by Nature - Only the week, measured by divine command, has no natural landmark. The three independent celestial motions—the daily rotation of our globe on its axis, the monthly circuit of the earth by the moon, and the yearly revolution of earth and moon about the sun—mark off our time, but there is no astronomical cycle connected with the seven-day week. Yet the Sabbath, given in the beginning by the God of nature, definitely marked off by the manna, even before the law at Sinai, is identified in the New Testament (Genesis 2:1-3; Exodus 16:4, 5, 22-26; 20:8-11; Luke 23:54 to 24:1); since then we can count the weeks back into the past with certainty from known dates.

III. CALENDARS RECONCILE THE THREE MOTIONS

The three natural motions that measure our time are incommensurable, that is, do not “come out even.” While the earth is making one revolution around the sun, the moon revolves around the earth 12 times and about a third of a circuit over, and the earth turns on its own axis 365 times plus a little less than a fourth of a turn. Therefore calendars have had to be devised in order to count years by a whole number of days or lunar months.

Lunar Calendar Based on the Moon - A lunar calendar year of 12 moon months is 10 or 11 days shorter than the true solar year, which governs the seasons. Hence in an uncorrected lunar calendar, like that of the Moslems to this day, a summer month moves gradually earlier until it comes in the spring, and so on. But the Babylonians, Assyrians, Jews, Greeks, and early Romans kept their lunar years in step with the seasons by adding to the year periodically. The Jews, like the Babylonians, inserted an extra lunar month 7 times in each 19 years.

Solar Calendar Measures the Sun’s Year - Our modern world today uses a solar calendar, that is, one based on the sun’s year and disregarding the moon entirely. We do not need to add extra months, since our ordinary 365-day year is only about a fourth of a day shorter than the true period of the earth’s journey around the sun, but we correct it every four years (with certain exceptions) by adding one day to February. Our New Year’s Day now comes about ten days after the winter solstice; but if we should drop the leap-year system, the New Year would move one day earlier every four years. Eventually the alignment of the months with the seasons would be noticeably different from what it is now.

This was what happened to the ancient Egyptian year, from which our modern year was derived. This Egyptian calendar year of exactly 365 days was divided into twelve 30-day months plus 5 extra days at the end. The leap-year correction was never made until the country was conquered by the Romans less than half a century before Christ.

This was soon after Julius Caesar had adapted the Roman months to the 365-day year, which he introduced from Egypt, with the addition of a day every four years. Our present calendar is essentially Caesar’s “Julian” calendar, months and all, with a further slight adjustment.

NOTE: Astronomers came to realize that the insertion of an extra day in every fourth February was a little more than was needed to keep the calendar year from slipping constantly earlier in the seasons. Since too many leap-year days had been added, the calendar year was beginning noticeably later than it should. So in 1582 a correction was made in order to move the calendar year back ten days to put the spring equinox on March 21, its supposed date in A.D. 325, when the present Easter rule was adopted. Pope Gregory XIII decreed that ten days should be dropped out of the calendar, so that the day following Thursday, October 4, was called Friday, October 15, instead of Friday, October 5. Further, in order to avoid a similar error in the future, the century years not divisible by 400 (as 1700, 1800, 1900, 2100, etc.) were not to be leap years. The Catholic countries accepted the "Gregorian" calendar immediately, but other countries followed much later—England and her colonies in 1752, and eastern Europe only in the present century. In no case was the sequence of the days of the week disturbed, and no time was "lost," for the days dropped out had already been counted erroneously in the excess leap years through the preceding centuries.

Space has been given here to the explanation of the Julian calendar because modern historians date all past events (up to the A.D. [Anno Domini] 1582 revision) in Julian years.

The Starting Points of Years - A year is a circle; the end of one is the beginning of the next, and there is nothing in nature to indicate any one starting point. Sometimes the year is thought of as opening with the beginning of the agricultural cycle of sowing and reaping, which itself varies in different parts of the world. But a calendar year must have a definite point of departure. Four landmarks of the solar year have been mentioned—the solstices and equinoxes. Ancient calendar years were often begun at or near one of these easily observable points. Our own year begins on January 1, near the winter solstice, because that was approximately where Julius Caesar placed the Roman New Year's Day in his calendar, which we have inherited.

Other ancient calendars began the year in the spring or in the fall. In Palestine, it was natural to think of the year as beginning in the fall, when the early rains brought new life to the country after the dry season, without rain for several months, and when winter wheat and barley were sown; the harvests came in the spring and summer, ending with grape gathering in the autumn. The Hebrews had two year reckonings. One (instituted at the Exodus) was begun in the spring, for numbering the months and reckoning the beginning of the series of sacred festivals; the other, the old civil year, started with the seventh month, in the fall. These were lunar years, reckoned from the new moon, not from the equinox.

IV. DATING ANCIENT EVENTS BY YEARS

Ancient Year Systems - Various methods of counting a series of years were in use in ancient times. In an earlier period, a year was designated by the name of a principal event, or sometimes by the name of an annual official. In Assyria, this was an honorary official, called a limmu; in Athens and in the Roman world, the names were those of genuine annual magistrates—in Athens an archon and in Rome the two consuls. In the Near East, calendar years were numbered in series during each king's reign, and thus called regnal years. In the Bible (though not in the first five books) we find regnal-year dates, such as "in the seventh year of Artaxerxes."

If men had begun at creation and counted year 1, year 2, and on continuously, and if the Bible records had been dated by such a system, it would be a simple matter to know exactly how long ago any event happened. But no such information exists. Not until relatively late in ancient times, long after the period covered in this introductory section, did anyone use an era for dating, that is, a continuous series of years numbered consecutively from one starting point. For example, the Seleucid Era was a continuation of the

reign of Seleucus I, one of the successors of Alexander the Great. The year 1 of this era began, according to the Macedonian calendar, in the fall of the year that we now call 312 B.C. The Seleucid Era was used in Syria and Mesopotamia for many centuries. The Greeks long employed a series of four-year periods called Olympiads, marked off by the quadrennial Olympic games, and the Romans used a system of numbering years consecutively from the supposed founding of Rome. Both these series, unlike the Seleucid Era, were devised centuries after the quite uncertain traditional dates of the events from which they were supposed to be reckoned. They were not used in everyday dating formulas—only for referring to historical events.

Our System of B.C. Dating - Today the greater part of the world uses, or is familiar with, the dating of the Christian Era, by which all years are numbered from approximately the time of the birth of Christ. This book is being written in the year known as A.D. (for anno Domini) 2023. This means “in the year of (our) Lord 2023,” that is, the 2,023rd year from the birth of Christ. To be more exact, it is the 2,023rd from the point assigned to the nativity by Dionysius Exiguus, the 6th-century originator of this method of reckoning. The fact that the traditional starting point is now known to have been several years away from the actual date of Christ’s birth does not affect the usefulness of this scale of years for dating purposes.

When it became the custom to date events by the number of years from the supposed time of the birth of Christ, it became convenient to date earlier events as so many years “before Christ” (abbreviated B.C.). Thus for historical purposes the Julian calendar years, in which dates had been reckoned in the Roman world since Julius Caesar’s day, were extended backward, as if they had existed in all past time. When we say, for example, that the first year of Ptolemy’s “Era of Nabonassar” began February 26, 747 B.C., we mean that it began on the day that would have been called February 26 if the Julian calendar had been in use at that time, and in the 747th year before the year that was later to be numbered the first of the Christian Era.

It is to be remembered that historians and chronologists have given the year preceding A.D. 1 the designation of 1 B.C., and the year preceding that 2 B.C., and so on.

NOTE: One point must be borne in mind: In reckoning an interval between a B.C. and an A.D. date, computation is hindered by the fact that in the chronological scale there is no year numbered zero between 1 B.C. and A.D. 1. Therefore, for convenience in calculation, astronomers use a slightly different system. Instead of B.C. and A.D. they use negative and positive numbers, with the year preceding year 1 numbered as zero. The positive numbers are the same as the A.D. numbers, but 0 corresponds to 1 B.C., -1 corresponds to 2 B.C., -2 to 3 B.C. etc., as the following diagram shows:

Astronomical	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4
Chronological	5 B.C.	4 B.C.	3 B.C.	2 B.C.	1 B.C.	A.D. 1	A.D. 2	A.D. 3	A.D. 4
	leap year				leap year				leap year

Thus when an astronomer speaks of an eclipse that took place in the year -567, he means the year that historians and chronologists call 568 B.C. (Note that the minus number is always one less than the corresponding B.C. date. Note also that the leap years, from A.D. 4 on the present, come in years whose numbers are divisible by 4, but that before Christ the leap years run 0, -4, -8, etc., that is, 1 B.C., 5 B.C., 9 B.C., etc.) The astronomical numbering is rarely found outside of technical astronomical

works. Histories and reference books use the B.C.–A.D. scale, which has no zero year—a deficiency that must be kept in mind in calculating intervals between B.C. and A.D. dates.

Just as years B.C. run “backward,” that is, 1900 B.C. is followed by 1899, 1898, 1897, etc., so do the centuries—the 16th century B.C. runs from 1600 through 1599 and down through 1501; the 5th century B.C. runs from 500 through 401 B.C.

The B.C. Dating of Old Testament Events - It is possible to date Old Testament events in the B.C. scale only where there is a time statement that can be equated with a known historical date. Astronomical calculation can be used to fix a date for which we have ancient eclipse records or observations of the heavenly bodies, and sometimes a date that is given in two calendars. Thus we have synchronisms between the years of the last kings of Judah and certain years of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar. Since the years of Nebuchadnezzar are known from astronomical data found by archeologists in Babylonia, also from observations recorded in Ptolemy’s astronomical work known as the *Almagest*, and from his canon of the kings, the years of these kings of Judah can be aligned with the B.C. dating. Also we have an indirect contact with the Assyrian limmu lists by means of a reference to Ahab in the Battle of Qarqar (mentioned, however, only in non-Biblical documents). But for the early Biblical dates we are dependent on tracing back the line of Bible time-statements from these later more certain dates, and there is room for difference of opinion in this process. Specific information is scarce, and systems of reckoning vary; hence our knowledge of ancient chronology has accumulated gradually and is still far from complete.

A.M. Dating From Creation - Genesis furnishes no era dating, but older chronologists counted years from Creation as *anno mundi* (“in the year of the world,” abbreviated a.m.) 1, 2, etc., based on the patriarchal genealogies. These genealogies, if complete and if correctly interpreted, would give exact intervals from Adam to Abraham. But an a.m. scale requires a fixed starting point. Each writer’s B.C. date for a.m. 1 (1) varies with his choice of the Masoretic or the LXX figures (nearly 1,500 years’ difference), and (2) his interpretation of these and all other OT chronological data. For this reason an a.m. date has no basis other than the writer’s theory.

Marginal Dates in Printed Bibles - A.M. dates taken from Archbishop James Ussher’s *Annals* (published 1650-58) were the first to appear in the margin of the KJV. The KJV carried no dates originally, and was not the first Bible to present those of Ussher, which had been printed in the margin of a French Catholic Latin Bible in 1662. Ussher’s dates (a.m. only) appeared in an Oxford Bible in 1679, with the figures revised in spots by Bishop William Lloyd; his a.m. and B.C. dates were incorporated (probably by Lloyd also) into a London edition of 1701. Thenceforth these dates, generally credited to Ussher but partly revised, and inserted without any official authorization, continued to be printed until they were almost viewed as a part of the Bible by generations of readers.

In the latter part of the 19th century, many Bibles included new chronological tables based on later knowledge, while retaining the old “Ussher” dates in the margin or omitting them entirely. In the 1950’s a modernized set of marginal dates came out in a new KJV edition. Similar ones appeared as late as 1974 in a Collins edition of the KJV (although most Bibles by then had no marginal dates): Events before David are dated only by centuries, and later dates differ from Ussher’s, though not consistently. In Ezra 7, there appears a curious shift; Ezra’s journey to Jerusalem is dated 428 B.C., long after Nehemiah’s arrival. This is based on a theory that, contradicting the Bible account, puts that event in the 37th, not the 7th, year of Artaxerxes.

Part Four: Chronology in the Bible Record

In view of all the differing ancient systems of chronology and of the numerous theories of later interpreters of the Bible, it becomes necessary to consider the methods to be used in assigning B.C. dates to the Old Testament events, particularly down through the Exodus to the end of the 40 years' wandering.

This dating hinges on two points: (1) the text in which the source information is found, and (2) the problem of the meaning of the time statements in that text.

I. TIME STATEMENTS IN GENESIS

The Hebrew, Samaritan, and Septuagint Texts - The original text of our Old Testament, except a few chapters, was written in Hebrew. The translations in use today are made almost entirely from the Masoretic text, which has been handed down by the Jews through the centuries, copied from one manuscript to another with scrupulous care.

In Genesis, the years of the patriarchs in the Hebrew text differ from those in the Samaritan Pentateuch, a variant form of the Hebrew text preserved by the half-Jewish, half-pagan Samaritans. Different from both of these are the figures in the Septuagint, a Greek translation begun in the 3rd Century B.C. in Alexandria. It gives higher figures for several patriarchs, inserts a second Cainan after Arphaxad, and shows other differences.

The totals from creation to the Flood are: Hebrew, 1,656 years; Samaritan, 1,307; Septuagint, 2,242 (or 2,262; manuscripts vary); from the Flood to Abraham: Hebrew, 352 years; Samaritan, 942; Septuagint, 1,232 (or 1,132).

Since the oldest known Masoretic manuscripts of the Pentateuch are late copies, more than 1,000 years away from the originals, some scholars have thought that the figures' for the patriarchs had become changed since the time when the Septuagint translation was made. But the age of a manuscript is not the sole deciding factor. The later of any two copies may preserve the wording of a text much nearer to the unknown original than a much older manuscript copied carelessly or from an old but already corrupted text. Thus, the work of the "lower" or textual critic involves determining, from various kinds of evidence, which form of the text has most likely been changed from the original.

For the ages of the patriarchs, the Samaritan text is less trustworthy than the Hebrew, because we find in other places revisions of the wording to agree with their views. And the Septuagint translators, who elsewhere (as in Daniel) injected their own ideas, are thus more likely than the meticulous Hebrew copyists to present a revised form of the genealogy.

Reasons for Preferring the Hebrew Lists - Some Septuagint manuscripts, having Methuselah 167 at his son's birth, thus make him survive the Flood 14 years; other manuscripts, making him 187, avoid this difficulty. Also, there are other reasons why the translators of the Septuagint version were more likely to have changed the figures than the later Masoretes, who handed down the Hebrew text to us. The Greek-speaking Jews who translated the Septuagint in Alexandria wished to win for it the respect of the learned

Greek world. It is known that they were much less strict about preserving the letter of the original than were the Palestinian Jews. Their version was made for Greek-speaking readers. If they wished to make the chronology of the earliest ages compare favorably with the beliefs of the current Alexandrian philosophy and seem more reasonable to the Greek mind, they would naturally lengthen the periods as much as possible, and smooth down the sudden drop, after the Flood, in the life span and the interval from father to son; and that is exactly what their figures do, repeatedly running 100 years higher.

Some scholars have contended that the Septuagint was translated from the correct text, but that the Masoretes, working this side of the time of Christ, made or perpetuated changes to discredit the Septuagint because it was the version largely used by the Christians. But if this were so, why would the Jews alter such minor points as the ages of the patriarchs and leave unchanged the 70 weeks and other prophecies used by Christians to prove the Messiahship of Jesus? If the Masoretes copied their texts so conscientiously as to retain, word for word, so many evidences against themselves, their text should be preferred to that of the Alexandrian translators, who took liberties with the text to advance their own ideas. This question cannot be settled with certainty. Though the Dead Sea scrolls sometimes support a variant Septuagint wording, they have also confirmed the trustworthiness of the Masoretic Hebrew text, on which have been based the most noteworthy and widely accepted translations, both Catholic and Protestant. This book will follow that time-honored practice and base the discussion of the patriarchs on the Hebrew text.

II. SOME PRINCIPLES OF BIBLE CHRONOLOGY

In converting the time statements of the Bible into chronological computation, we must consider certain general principles of the Hebrew language and mode of reckoning that apply to the Pentateuch and to other scriptures as well. It should be kept in mind that the meaning of a sentence is not necessarily what the words mean to us now, even after they are translated, but what the ancient writer meant when he used those words. In the Bible, “son” may mean a grandson (Genesis 31:55, cf. v.43); “brother” may mean a nephew or an uncle (Genesis 14:12, 16; 29:10-12). Even so simple a statement as the fact that Noah was 600 years old at the time of the Flood can be, and generally is, misunderstood.

The Method of Expressing Age - Noah was “six hundred years old”—literally, “a son of 600 years”—when the Flood came (Genesis 7:6). What this phrase means is made clear in the same chapter by the first complete dating formula given in the Bible: “In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up” (verse 11). Therefore “a son of 600 years” does not mean that Noah was 600 years old as we understand it, but that he was in his 600th year, still unexpired. In our modern reckoning we say that a child is so many months old in his first year. He reaches his first birthday at the end of his first years, and he is not considered one year old until that first birthday. But when he reaches that day, his second year begins. So, he will one day be 21 years old, after he has completed his 21st year; he will be 21 all through his 22nd year until upon its completion he is said to reach the age of 22. We would count Noah 600 years of age only at the end of his 600th year, but the Hebrews counted him “a son of 600 years” in his 600th year (see on Genesis 5:32).

Consecutive Ages of the Patriarchs - Just as Noah was “600 years old” in his 600th year, so Adam must have been 130 years old in his 130th year when Seth was born (Genesis 5:3), and not what we call 130

years old. On this principle, Seth was born in the 130th year of the world (anno mundi or a.m. 130); thus the sum of the ages of the patriarchs at the birth of each oldest son will furnish a continuous series of years from the creation *only*.

NOTE: One point must be decided in numbering these years of the patriarchs. Is Adam's 130th year, or a.m. 130, also counted as Seth's first year? Or does Seth's count begin the following year, in a.m. 131? The first method, by counting one year twice in each generation, will give an incorrect total of the years elapsed, for there will be an overlap of one year for each name in the list. By the second method, the sum will give the equivalent of continuous reckoning by an era. The first cannot be correct in this case because it would make Methuselah survive the Flood; by the second, method the last year of his life is the year of the Flood. The second, then, must be the basis of the Genesis list. Therefore, Seth's age at the birth of Enos is to be added to Adam's 130 years.

We have no way of knowing just how the patriarchs themselves counted their ages at the time. Presumably the years were not reckoned by birthdays, but by beginning each year of age at the beginning of the calendar year, for Noah's 601st year seems to begin at the 1st day of the 1st month (Genesis 8:13). It has been the immemorial custom in the Far East to consider a child a year old in his first calendar year, and to count him two years old on the next New Year's Day, even a few days after his birth. Either the patriarchs began the first year after the next New Year's Day, or else the numbers were adjusted later, when the list was made up, in order to avoid the overlap.

Inclusive Reckoning - But apparently the common usage in counting intervals of time was the inclusive reckoning, that is, counting the incomplete days, years, etc., at the beginning and end of a period as if they were whole units. The classic example is, of course, the three-day period of Christ in the tomb, from Friday afternoon to Sunday morning (see "the third day," "in three days," and "after three days" all used as equivalent expressions for the same period by the same writer: Matthew 17:23; 27:40, 63). The clearest Old Testament example is in 2 Kings 18:9, 10, where "at the end of three years" is what we would reckon as a two-year interval, but the usage occurs also in the books of Moses. Joseph put his brothers "into ward three days," but not three full days, for on "the third day" he bound Simeon and sent the others home (Genesis 42:17-19); and "the second year after" the Exodus (Numbers 9:1) really means the year immediately following it, the first year being the year in which the period began.

It is clear from source documents that not only the Jews but also other ancient peoples used inclusive reckoning, by counting the beginning and end of a period. We find the Greeks calling the 4-year Olympiad between Olympic Games a pentaeteris, or "5-year period," and the Romans referring to the winter solstice (then December 25) as "the eighth day before" January 1—the 8th counting both the 25th and the 1st. Even in later times we find the looser reckoning in common speech, although in mathematical computation the time elapsed would be calculated exactly.

Parts and Wholes - The Bible writers sometimes use another characteristically Oriental type of expression—they name the whole period for the part, meaning actually the latter part of a period that has already begun. For example, at Kadesh the Israelites were condemned to wander 40 years in the wilderness (Numbers 14:33), that is, the remainder of that period, counted from the departure from Egypt. Actually this was already in the 2nd year and only 38 years were left from Kadesh to the final stage of the journey (Deuteronomy 2:14). The 430-year sojourning of "the children of Israel" (Exodus 12:40)—including the time from Abraham, long before there were any Israelites—can be explained as an example

of such reckoning. Also explained below are two cases of three sons listed for one birth year; yet they were not triplets, and neither first-named son was the eldest.

The Oriental, generally less concerned with exact time than the Westerner, is more likely to use approximate time statements and round numbers, and the reader of the Bible needs to keep this in mind. But the Old Testament is far more specific in its time statements than any other ancient literary document.

III. THE LINE OF THE PATRIARCHS

World Year (AM)	Year of birth or event	Scripture
0	Heaven and earth and Adam and Eve created	Genesis 1:1
130	Seth born, son of Adam with Eve	Genesis 5:3
235	Enosh born, son of Seth	Genesis 5:6
325	Kenan born, son of Enosh	Genesis 5:9
395	Mahalaleel born, son of Kenan	Genesis 5:12
460	Jared born, son of Mahalalel	Genesis 5:15
622	Enoch born, son of Jared	Genesis 5:18
687	Methuselah born, son of Enoch	Genesis 5:21
874	Lamech born, son of Methusaleh	Genesis 5:25
930	Adam died at 930	Genesis 5:5
987	Enoch "walks with God"	Genesis 5:23-24
1042	Seth died at 912	Genesis 5:8
1056	Noah born, son of Lamech	Genesis 5:28-29
1140	Enosh died at 905	Genesis 5:11
1235	Kenan died at 910	Genesis 5:14
1290	Mahalaleel died at 895	Genesis 5:17
1422	Jared died at 962	Genesis 5:20
1557	Shem, Ham and Japheth born, sons of Noah (Noah still 500 years old, nearly 501)	Genesis 5:32

1651	Lamech died at 777	Genesis 5:31
1656	Methuselah died at 969 and was the oldest man that ever lived.	Genesis 5:27
1656	Year of the FLOOD	
1656	On the 17th (Septuagint: 27th) day of the 2nd month, the fountains of the great deep were broken up and the windows of heaven opened.	Genesis 7:4-11
1656	On the 17th day of the seventh month, Noah's Ark rested in "mountains of Ararat"	Genesis 8:4
1657	Noah and his family left the ark (27th day of the second month)	Genesis 8:13-14
1658	Arphaxad born, son of Shem (Shem 100 years old, nearly 101)	Genesis 11:10
1658	Arphaxad born, son of Shem	Genesis 11:10
1693	Shelah born, son of Arphaxad	Genesis 11:12
1723	Eber born, son of Shelah	Genesis 11:14
1757	Peleg born, son of Eber	Genesis 11:16
1787	Reu born, son of Peleg	Genesis 11:18
1819	Serug born, son of Reu	Genesis 11:20
1849	Nahor born, son of Serug	Genesis 11:22
1878	Terah born, son of Nahor	Genesis 11:24
1948	Abram born, son of Terah	Genesis 11:26
1958	Sarai born, wife of Abram	Genesis 17:17
1996	Peleg died	Genesis 11:19
1997	Nahor died	Genesis 11:25
2006	Noah died	Genesis 9:28
2026	Reu died	Genesis 11:21
2034	Ishmael born, son of Abram with Sarai's handmaiden	Genesis 16:16

	Hagar	
2047	Abram and Sarai renamed Abraham and Sarah by the LORD and Abraham circumcised	Genesis 17:5-15
2047	Sodom and Gomorrah destroyed	Genesis 19:24
2048	Isaac born, son of Abraham with Sarah	Genesis 21:5
2049	Serug died	Genesis 11:23
2083	Terah died	Genesis 11:32
2085	Sarah died	Genesis 23:1
2096	Arphaxad died	Genesis 11:13
2108	Jacob and Esau born, sons of Isaac with Rebekah	Genesis 25:26
2123	Abraham died	Genesis 25:7
2126	Shelah died	Genesis 11:15
2157	Shem died	Genesis 11:11
2171	Ishmael died	Genesis 25:17
2187	Eber died	Genesis 11:17
2199	Joseph born, son of Jacob with Rachel	Genesis 41:46
2216	Joseph sold by his brothers	Genesis 37:2
2227	Joseph interprets the dreams of the butler and the baker while in prison	Genesis 41:1
2228	Isaac died	Genesis 35:28
2229	Joseph promoted to Pharaoh's second	Genesis 41:46
2238	Jacob moved to Egypt at the age of 130 after 7 years of plenty and 2 years of famine when Joseph was 39	Genesis 47:9; 45:11; 41:46
2255	Jacob died	Genesis 47:28
2309	Joseph died	Genesis 50:26
2365	Aaron born, son of Amram with Jochebed	Exodus 7:7
2368	Moses born, son of Amram with Jochebed	Exodus 7:7

2448	The Israelites left in a mass exodus from Egypt	Genesis 15:13; 1 Kings 6:1
2487	Aaron and Moses died	Deuteronomy 34:7
2448	The Israelites entered Canaan	Joshua 4:19
2448-2884	Period of Joshua, Judges and Saul, first King of Israel	1 Kings 6:1; 2 Samuel 5:4
2853	Jesse begat David	2 Samuel 5:4
2883-2923	David reigned as king of Israel	1 Kings 2:11 (40 year reign)
2890	David moves his capitol from Hebron to Jerusalem	1 Kings 2:11
2923-2963	Solomon son of David reigns as king of Israel	1 Kings 11:42
2927	Foundation of Temple laid in the 4th year of Solomon's reign 480th year after the Exodus	1 Kings 6:1

The Patriarchs From Adam to the Flood - The list of the patriarchs in Genesis 5 begins with Adam, then continues with Seth, born in Adam's 130th year (or a.m. 130, according to those who construct an a.m. scale of years), followed by Enos, born 105 years later, Cainan, 90 years after that, and so on to Noah. For the age of Noah at the birth of Shem we must look elsewhere, for Genesis 5:32 says only that "Noah was five hundred years old: and Noah begat Shem, Ham, and Japheth."

NOTE: If 500 seems an unreasonable age for even a patriarch at the birth of his first son, it may be remarked that the record does not state that he was childless that long. He could have had older children who died or who rejected their father's message, but we cannot speculate on that. In the absence of information to the contrary (as, for example, in the case of Seth), we assume that each son named in the line was the oldest. Some have sought to reconcile the long life spans with later conditions by reckoning months or some unit shorter than a year. The use of months would make the patriarchs fathers at the tender ages of nine, seven, and even five! And what time unit between a month and a year has ever been known?

This might be taken to indicate that the sons were triplets, or at least that Shem was the firstborn; but a comparison of Genesis 7:6 and 11:10 shows that Shem was not the eldest, born when his father was 500; instead, he was 100 years old two years after the Flood (which came when Noah was 600), and hence was born when Noah was 502 years old. Apparently Shem was named first because of his importance, which depended not on his age but on the fact that through him the genealogy was carried on, and possibly because through his line were descended the Israelites.

The B.C. dating of this patriarchal period is not possible to determine. The first links between Biblical and B.C. dating come in the time of the kings of Israel and Judah.

The Chronology of the Flood - The Deluge lasted one year and ten days, from the 17th day of the 2nd month in Noah's 600th year to the 27th day of the 2nd month in Noah's 601st year (see on Genesis 8:14).

Since it is not known what sort of calendar Noah used to calculate his month dates, opinions differ as to what kind of year this was. The 150 days of the rising and prevailing waters, ending on the 17th of the 7th month, constitute exactly 5 months. Therefore, each month had 30 days. Since this could not happen if the months were regulated by the moon, which alternates 29 and 30 days, some would conclude that the Genesis account is based on a solar calendar of 30-day months, like that of the Egyptians. In that case, the duration of the Flood was either 370 days or, if 5 extra days were reckoned at the end of the year, as in Egypt, it was 375 days. Others, however, think that a lunar year was intended, (see NOTE) and that the ten days beyond one full year would indicate the difference between a lunar year of 354 or 355 days and a solar year of 365 days.

NOTE: In that case the five consecutive 30-day months may have resulted from the use of the common method of determining the lengths of the months by observation: If the new crescent was visible at the end of the 29th of the month, the next day was called the 1st of the new month; if not, it was called the 30th and the next evening became the 1st of the month, and any error was corrected at the next visible crescent. This argument is based on the supposition that the moon was obscured much of the time during the stormy 150-day period of the Flood, so that a series of five 30-day months may have accumulated before the reckoning could be adjusted. A different lunar-month scheme, placing certain Flood-year dates on the Sabbath, is unprovable.

The Septuagint apparently means to imply that the original total represented a lunar year plus ten days, for it changes the duration to exactly one calendar year by translating the ending date as the 17th day of the 2nd month, the same day as the beginning, instead of the 27th. This looks like replacing one lunar year and ten days with one solar year, as more understandable in Egypt. There is insufficient basis, however, for conjecturing an antediluvian calendar from these dates, or for speculating on whether the “second month” was numbered from the spring or fall. Such considerations as the rainy season or the planting season in Bible lands are hardly relevant, since later conditions cannot be compared to the climatic conditions preceding or immediately following the Deluge. The month reckoning would probably be that of Moses rather than that of Noah himself, and the spring-beginning year as a new reckoning introduced at the Exodus may or may not have been used by Moses in writing Genesis.

The Patriarchs From the Flood to the Exodus - The patriarchs after the Flood are listed in Genesis 11. Arphaxad was born two years after the Flood, when Shem was 100 years old, Salah was born 35 years later, and Eber 30 years after that; and so the list goes on to Terah and Abram. However, Abram was not born when Terah was 70; this is a case similar to that of Shem, for Abram, though named first, was not the oldest son. When he was born his father was not 70, but 130 years old; for Abram was 75 when God called him to go to Canaan and made a covenant with him after Terah had died at the age of 205 (Genesis 11:32; 12:1-4). Although the list of the patriarchs with their ages ends with Abram (chapter 11:26), we are told that Isaac was born 100 years after his father (chapter 21:5), and Jacob 60 years after that (chapter 25:26).

The Genesis data on the patriarchs’ ages extend to Jacob’s entry into Egypt (chapter 47:9) at the age of 130. From this, it can be computed that he was 91 when Joseph was born (see on chapter 27:1), but Joseph’s birth year offers no help in carrying the line farther; here the age data stops.

The interval from Jacob’s migration to the Exodus must be derived from the 430 years of Exodus 12:40, 41. Even with that, only if one can assume that no generation is left out in the lists of the patriarchs, is any continuous count possible from Creation to the Exodus.

The Four Hundred and the Four Hundred Thirty Years - Abraham's "seed" would be "a stranger in a land that is not theirs," would serve a foreign nation, and be afflicted; and the period was to last 400 years (Genesis 15:13). That the whole duration of the sojourning, servitude, and affliction was encompassed in the 400 years is not clear in the English, but it is indicated by the inverted parallelism of the Hebrew sentence (see on Genesis 15:13). Isaac, the appointed seed of Abraham whose descendants would see the complete fulfillment of this prophecy, was a sojourner, and began early in life to be "afflicted" by his rival, Ishmael (Genesis 21:8-12; see on Genesis 15:13 for the 400 years). Ending also at the Exodus is a period of 430 years covering the "sojourning" (Exodus 12:40), not merely the phases of servitude and affliction. This is explained by a New Testament reference to the 430 years between the covenant with Abraham and the giving of the law at Mt. Sinai, soon after the Exodus (see on Exodus 12:40 and Gal. 3:17).

Both these periods can be harmonized if the 430 years are counted from the call of Abraham, when he was 75 years old, and if the 400 years are reckoned from 30 years later, that is about the time when Isaac, as a small child, began to be persecuted by Ishmael after he was confirmed as the "seed" (Genesis 21:8-12). The Hebrew people called themselves both the "seed of Abraham" and the "children of Israel," and Paul evidently interpreted the second phrase, used in Exodus 12:40, as meaning the first.

Two Hundred and Fifteen Years in Egypt - Popular and scholarly misunderstanding of these periods covering the sojourning and affliction of the descendants of Abraham has caused chronological confusion as to the time spent by Israel in Egypt. The interval between the call of Abram, at age 75, and the Exodus was 430 years, of which 215 had passed when Jacob went into Egypt (25 years to Isaac's birth in Abraham's century year, plus 60, Isaac's age at Jacob's birth, plus 130, Jacob's age at his migration, a total of 215 years). Therefore, the remainder of the 430 years, the Egyptian sojourn, was 215 years. If this seems a rather short time in Egypt, it should be considered that Moses was the grandson (also great-grandson) of Levi (Numbers 26:57-59), who entered Egypt as an adult. This fact would not fit into an interval of 400 years, but would be quite possible for 215 years, according to Levi's life span (see on Exodus 6:16, 20).

Was it 430 full years from Abraham's call to the Exodus, or 429 full years—430 inclusive, by the reckoning most commonly used in Bible times? The latter would seem more likely if it were not for the specific wording of the text: "At the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day" (Exodus 12:41). This would seem to indicate 430 elapsed years, ending on the day of the Exodus. Thus, the reckoning is considered exact rather than inclusive.

A.M. Dating Not Conclusive - Because the 430-year interval between Abraham's years and the Exodus appears to attach the latter to the patriarchal genealogies, some have concluded that a continuous a.m. reckoning from creation can be linked with the B.C. dating. An a.m. Exodus date based on the patriarchs is entirely inconclusive. It must be remembered that these genealogies do not necessarily represent a complete year scale. Reasons have been given for preferring the ages of the patriarchs as given in the Hebrew text rather than in the Septuagint version. However, in using either reckoning we cannot exclude the possibility that some generations may not have been included. We remember that Luke lists the second Cainan (Luke 3:36). The correctness of the ages of the individuals does not imply the completeness of the list, for no total is given.

The Bible does not claim to be a complete record of all past history, and Bible genealogies do not always include every link in the chain; the Hebrew often uses the word “son” to mean grandson or descendant. This is evident in Ezra’s genealogy, which omits several links (Ezra 7:1-5; cf. 1 Chronicles 6:7-9; Ezra 3:2); Matthew lists 14 generations from David to Christ, thus leaving out 4, for what reason he does not tell us (Matthew 1:8, 11; cf. 1 Chronicles 3:10-12, 15, 16). The fact that sometimes one Bible writer omits what another includes does not invalidate the authority of either, but it should warn us against dogmatism on the date of creation, the Flood, or the Exodus, or on any chronology based on genealogical tables alone. Exact chronology is better reserved for the later centuries, where the Bible gives many exact time statements and synchronisms that enable us to locate the B.C. dating of key events with certainty. If we accept Luke’s second Cainan as indicating a link not mentioned in the Genesis list, we must lengthen the period from creation to the Exodus by at least one life span—how much more we cannot know since Luke gives no data for Cainan, and one omission implies the possibility of others. It is not necessary to suppose that gaps of that kind would be either extensive or important, but we should refrain from dogmatizing on the exact number of years between the creation and the Exodus, and from setting up any creation date based thereon. (The date of creation cannot be derived from the Biblical data.)

With caution, then, as to attempting any a.m. dating, we may proceed to the Biblical reckoning of the years of the wilderness wandering before taking up the theories by which various B.C. dates are assigned to the Exodus.

The Reckoning of the Years From the Exodus - We find evidence of what approaches a reckoning by an era during the time of the 40 years’ wandering. Shortly before the children of Israel left Egypt, the Lord instructed Moses that “this month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you” (Exodus 12:2), and then proceeded with directions for holding the Passover on the 14th. The Israelites left Egypt immediately after the Passover, on the 15th (Numbers 33:3) of the spring month then called Abib (Exodus 23:15; 34:18; Deuteronomy 16:1), but later named Nisan (Esther 3:7), and still so called by the Jews.

Other dates are mentioned in this year, which was evidently counted as the first of the series, for the next year is called the second. The list of dated events shows this in tabulation:

	Month	Day	Year
Passover observed (Exodus 12:2, 6).....	1	13	1 st
Departure from Egypt (Numbers 33:3).....	1	15	
Manna given in Wilderness of Sin (Exodus 16:1)...	2	15	
Arrival at Sinai (Exodus 19:1).....	3	----	1 st
(Moses’ two 40-day periods on the mountain—Exodus 24:18; 34:28).....			
(Making of the tabernacle and equipment)			

Tabernacle erected (Exodus 40:1, 2, 17).....	1	1	2 nd
Passover enjoined (Numbers 9:1, 2).....	1	----	2 nd
Passover observed (Numbers 9:5), evidently first time since Exodus (cf. vs. 6-14).....	1	14	----
Numbering of men directed (Numbers 1:1).....	2	1	2 nd
Departure from Sinai (Numbers 10:11), nearly a year after arrival.....	2	20	2 nd
(Spies sent out in time of first ripe grapes, i.e. late summer—Numbers 13:17-20)			
(Return of spies to Kadesh 40 days later; Israel sentenced to 40 years' wandering—Numbers 13:25, 26; 14:33, 34)			
From Kadesh to crossing of Zared, 38 years (Deuteronomy 2:14)			
Death of Aaron on Mt. Hor (Numbers 33:38).....	5	1	40 th
Israel at Zared (Numbers 21:12) after Aaron's death (cf. Numbers 20:27-29; 21:4-11).....	6	----	40 th
(Moses' death; 30-day mourning—Deuteronomy 34:7,8).....	12	----	40 th
Crossing of Jordan and encampment before Jericho (Joshua 4:19).....	1	10	41 st
Passover kept in the Promised Land (Joshua 5:10)	----	14	41 st
Manna ceases (Joshua 5:11, 12), on 40th anniversary of the Exodus.....	----	15	41 st

Note that the “second year,” on the first day of which the tabernacle was erected, had already begun before the first anniversary of the Exodus, for the Israelites did not leave Egypt until the 15th of the 1st month, after half the month was past. This day of the erection of the sanctuary was the 1st of the divinely appointed 1st month, for it is the month of the Passover. It is evidently the first Abib since the departure from Egypt (see on Exodus 40:2 and Numbers 9:1, 2), for no one would argue for a stay of nearly two years at Sinai (see on Numbers 10:11). So “the second year after they were come out of the land of Egypt” (Numbers 9:1) meant the year immediately following the one in which the Exodus took place. It has been pointed out that in the commonly used inclusive reckoning, expressions translated “after” often mean “within.” Indeed, the preposition used in this phrase “after they were come out”—literally “for them to come out,” or “of their coming out”—is elsewhere rendered “within” a given time, as in Ezra 10:8.

The years as reckoned from the Exodus, then, were spring-beginning years, and the first of the series was the one in which the Hebrews left Egypt. If this series of years from the Exodus had been continued as an

era for dating subsequent events, it would have greatly simplified the problem of Old Testament chronology. Unfortunately it was not so used, although the record of the sequence must have been kept, for we seem to find one more reference to it, in connection with the date of Solomon's Temple.

IV. THE B.C. DATE OF THE EXODUS

The Problems in Dating the Exodus - It has been made clear why any A.M. dating, reckoned forward from creation and based on the assumption that the genealogies are complete, is only conjectural. We are in a better position to reckon backward to the patriarchs from later and better known periods, though not with complete certainty. The 430-year span from the Exodus back to Abraham locates that patriarch in the B.C. scale with the same degree of certainty as can be assigned to the year of the Exodus, depending on which of several methods one uses to arrive at a B.C. date for that event. From the Exodus, the forty years of wandering are numbered continuously, as in an era; then in the conquest of Canaan and the time of the judges there are various periods, some of which obviously overlap. If the information were complete and precise down through the kingdoms of Judah and Israel, to the time when the line of Bible dating joins the fixed dates of ancient history, the B.C. date of the Exodus and many other events would be unquestioned.

But even among those who accept the Bible data as correct, there are differences of opinion as to the period of the judges, for example, and the rather complicated interrelations of the reigns of the two kingdoms. This book, incorporating what seems a reasonably workable chronology built on Bible time statements, does not set forth a dogmatic statement of the case. The last word has not been said on this subject, because future discoveries may add to our exact knowledge of those ancient times. But if any dates at all are to be included for the reader's convenience, one system must be followed consistently.

The B.C. date of the Exodus presented in this book has been chosen out of many advocated by different scholars because it seems, at present, to be the best explanation of the Bible data in relation to the available information, and it harmonizes with the chronology adopted for chapters covering the period of Israel and Judah. In order to evaluate this Exodus dating, a brief outline of the historical background of Egypt must be sketched here introductory to a survey of the principal theories of the Exodus, with a summary of the difficulties of each and the reasons why the 15th-century date is chosen.

The Historical Background in Egypt - The Middle Kingdom in Egypt began during the Eleventh Dynasty. The first 150 years of the Twelfth Dynasty, which began in 1991 B.C., were the peak years, the classical period of Egyptian culture. At its end, Egyptian power declined. The Thirteenth Dynasty was restricted largely to southern Egypt, and the contemporary Fourteenth Dynasty in the north was weak. After a period of preliminary infiltration, the country was overrun in the latter half of the 18th century by the Hyksos, whose rulers, the "Shepherd Kings"—a title more properly translated as "rulers of foreign countries"—formed the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Dynasties. These conquerors, predominantly Semites from the eastern Mediterranean lands, probably included also non-Semitic Hurrians. Little is known of the Hyksos from the few records they left. They were not barbarous, for they probably introduced the horse and chariot, which the Egyptians afterward used to advantage in building their Asiatic empire. The Hyksos became Egyptianized, adopting Egyptian titles. They ruled as Pharaohs from a capital, called Avaris, in the Delta.

During the first half of the 16th century, the first king of the Eighteenth Dynasty drove the hated Hyksos—at least the ruling class—into Palestine. Egypt, again powerful, extended her sway over Palestine and Syria to the Euphrates. Great wealth went into vast building operations. A notable ruler of this dynasty was Queen Hatshepsut, who was associated on the throne with her husband Thutmose II (C. 1508-1504 B.C.), and her nephew Thutmose III. She was herself the real ruler from about 1500 until she finally disappeared from history about 1482, probably disposed of by her co-ruler, Thutmose III, whom she had kept so long in the background. After her death, her name was obliterated from many of her monuments and inscriptions. Thutmose III (C. 1482-1450) expanded the empire of Egypt to an extent never exceeded. The empire prospered through the reigns of Amenhotep II (C. 1450-1425), and Thutmose IV (C. 1425-1412) and well into the reign of Amenhotep III (C. 1412-1375). But in the latter's declining years, the expanding Hittite empire menaced Egypt's northern holdings in Asia, the Habiru or the sa-gaz plagued parts of Syria and Palestine, and many of the Egyptian-held cities fought among themselves.

Then came Amenhotep IV (C. 1387-1366), a visionary, unfit or unwilling to wield the strong scepter that was needed to stave off decline. Taking the name Ikhnaton, he turned all his energies to religious reform. Abandoning Thebes for a new capital dedicated to Aton (Aten), the sun disk, he suppressed all other cults. Meanwhile his Asiatic empire melted away. He ignored the frantic appeals for help from his loyal vassals in Palestine and Syria who were struggling against treachery and defection in the face of the menace of the sa-gaz or the Habiru. Many of these letters were unearthed among the royal archives in the ruins of Ikhnaton's capital (archeologists refer to them as the Amarna Letters, from Tell el 'Amarna, the modern place name of the ruins).

After Ikhnaton, whose religious reform died soon after him, the dynasty ended with several minor Pharaohs. One of these was the boy-king Tutankhamen, who has achieved latter-day fame through the mere accident that his last resting place—probably modest in comparison with those of the great rulers—escaped the depredations of tomb robbers.

Early in the Nineteenth Dynasty, under Seti I (1318-1299), Egypt began to regain a measure of control in Palestine. The long and energetic reign of Ramses II (1299-1232) left a great impression on his age. From the fifth year of his son Merneptah, we have an inscription on a commemorative pillar, or stele, indicating that the Israelites were then already in Palestine—the first mention of the name Israel outside the Bible, and the only one so far found in Egyptian records.

The Various Theories of the Exodus - The numerous Exodus theories differ in the placement of the narrative in relation to the Egyptian dynasties as well as in respect to the reckoning of the 400 and the 430 years (whether including the time from Abraham or only the sojourn in Egypt). Aside from theories held by few or now no longer considered seriously in scholarly circles, there are three principal classes of these interpretations of the Exodus. These date the event respectively in:

- (1) the 15th century B.C., under the Eighteenth Dynasty;
- (2) the 13th century, during the Nineteenth Dynasty;
- (3) two migrations, under the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Dynasties.

There are plausible arguments both for and against all these datings. The last, however, which puts Joshua two centuries before Moses, does such violence to the Biblical record that it is out of the question for anyone who is seeking to build a chronology consistent with the Biblical data as we have them.

Outmoded and Minority Views - The wide range of Exodus dating is illustrated by several theories placing it as early as the 17th century and as late as the 12th. One theory dated the Exodus in 1612, during the Hyksos rule in Egypt. This was based on a long reckoning of the period of the judges, assuming that the alternating judgeships and intervals of oppression were successive, totaling nearly 600 years; it fitted that into the 480-year period between the Exodus and Solomon by counting only the judgeships, not the interludes. Since Solomon cannot be shifted far, the longer the preceding period of the judges, the earlier the Exodus must be dated. Another early-Exodus theory had the Hebrews leaving Egypt as part of, or along with, the defeated Hyksos in the 16th century (reminiscent of Josephus' identification of the Hebrews as the Hyksos). This required not 40 but 200 years of desert wandering in order to equate the Hebrews with the Habiru. It cannot be made to harmonize with either the Bible or the historical background, neither can the dating at the other extreme, a theory of a late 12th-century Exodus, in the Twentieth Dynasty.

These three types of Exodus datings will suffice as examples of the range of variation; they need not be examined since they receive little or no notice today. The three principal theories will be discussed next.

The Nineteenth-Dynasty Exodus - The "traditional" theory, long commonly accepted, was that Israel was oppressed by Rameses II and left in his reign or that of his son Merneptah. This theory is still held by many writers, both in its original form and as the second phase of a double Exodus. The choice of Rameses as the Pharaoh of the oppression is based on the names of the cities of Pithom and Rameses, built by Hebrew slaves; on Rameses' capital being at Tanis, near Goshen; on the destruction of many Palestinian cities dated by archeologists in the 13th century; on a 430-year stay in Egypt; and on various elements of the archeological theories concerning that time, such as the late arrival of the Philistines, the absence of earlier pottery in certain regions, and conclusions drawn from certain Egyptian military campaigns. The unanswerable objection to this dating—if the Bible chronology is not to be ignored—is Merneptah's stele of the fifth year of his reign, referring to the Israelites as a people along with Palestinian places conquered. The Israelites could hardly have been already in Palestine in the fifth year of the Pharaoh of the Exodus even if they had migrated directly to Canaan. A desert wandering of 40 years (even if the vague meaning of "many years" is allowed) puts it completely out of the picture, to say nothing of other objections to the theory, such as the genealogical impossibility of 400 years from Joseph to Moses.

The Theory of a Double Exodus - A Nineteenth-Dynasty Exodus, along with a 15th-century invasion of Canaan, is held today by many scholars who reconstruct the Biblical story completely, or rather separate it into two waves of migration. There are various views as to which tribes went into Egypt and when they left; as to which tribes never left Canaan or who may have remained in Egypt; or by what routes and in what order they invaded Canaan. The mere impossibility of harmonizing such an Exodus with the 40 years or the 480 years is a minor objection indeed compared with the placing of Joshua 2 centuries before Moses, and compared with the uninhibited reinterpretation of the Bible account in regard to the patriarchs, the tribes, the geography, and the religion of the Hebrews.

This is not to belittle the scholarship that has been employed in this attempt to reconcile the Habiru invasion and other evidence pointing to a 15th century Exodus with the building of store cities for Ramses II and the late sacking of certain Palestinian towns. But the complexities of the various double-Exodus theories need not be discussed here, for a conservative commentary is written to throw light on the Bible account, not to revamp the story by conjecture to fit the selected historical setting.

The Eighteenth Dynasty Exodus Adopted in This Book - There remains the theory that places the Exodus in the mid-fifteenth century (1445 B.C. or thereabouts). It has been adopted in this book chiefly because of the intervals between this and later Biblical dates. It can be explained in terms of the Bible narrative and the historical and archeological setting.

The date is based on a statement synchronizing the 480th year from the Exodus with the 4th year of Solomon, in which the foundation of the Temple was laid in the month of Zif (1 Kings 6:1). This year was, according to the chronology accepted for this book, 967/66 B.C., that is, the Jewish regnal year beginning in the fall of 967 and ending in the fall of 966. Thus, the laying of the foundation in the month of Zif (approximately our May) would have occurred in the spring of 966 B.C. Then Zif in the 1st year, in which the Israelites left Egypt, was 479 years earlier than 966, which is 1445 B.C. This can be computed easily by the equation: If Zif in the 480th yr. = 966 B.C., then, going back 479 yrs. (479) Zif in the 1st yr. = 1445 B.C.

And Zif in the 1st year, beginning the 2nd month, is the month immediately following Abib (or Nisan), in which the Israelites left Egypt. So the Exodus, derived thus from the dating of Solomon's 4th year as 967/66 B.C., would have occurred in the spring of 1445 B.C., if the 480th year is meant as an era date, and not as a round number.

NOTE: If it is insisted that the 480 years are not to be counted inclusively, then the date would be 1446 B.C.—and some make it 1447 by counting 480 full years from 967 B.C.—but that would seem to disregard the original reckoning of the years from the Exodus. For the Temple was begun “in the four hundred and eightieth year after the children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt,” literally, in the 480th year of their coming out of Egypt, and the 1st year reckoned from the Exodus was the one in which the departure from Egypt took place; compare “the second year after” the Exodus (explained on pp. 186-188).

This 15th-century theory of the Exodus can be harmonized with the 400 and 430 years as reckoned from Abraham. A 1445 Exodus would put Abraham's migration to Canaan in 1875 B.C., and his journey into Egypt soon after, at the very period from which we have an ancient record of a Semitic sheik traveling in Egypt with his family and a large retinue as traders.

Joseph and Jacob, then, would be in Egypt 215 years before the Exodus, in the time of the Hyksos. The high honors bestowed upon Joseph have been regarded as most likely under a regime in which the Asiatic element predominated. Other details also fit into the picture. The statement that “Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian,” bought Joseph (Genesis 39:1) indicates a non-Egyptian dynasty; why else should it be noted particularly that the Pharaoh's captain of the guard was “an Egyptian”? Furthermore, the mention of horses and chariots (Genesis 41:43; 46:29) is regarded as harmonizing better with the Hyksos period than an earlier one, for it is generally accepted that there is no record of horses in Egypt before that time. Yet they were not imported rarities in Joseph's day, for the Egyptians sold their livestock, including horses, to the Pharaoh in exchange for food during the famine (Genesis 47:17). For other points see on chapter 39:1.

The story of Moses and the Exodus can be fitted into the historical setting of the reigns of Thutmose I through Amenhotep II. Thutmose I and Thutmose III carried on building operations by means of Asiatic slave labor. Hatshepsut as Moses' foster mother, Thutmose III as the king from whom Moses fled to Midian, and Amenhotep II as the Pharaoh of the Exodus seem to fit the possibilities of the Bible story. We have even the fact that the successor of Amenhotep II was an unforeseen heir to the throne—a circumstance that would be expected if the eldest son had died in the tenth plague.

If the 40 years' wandering ended and the invasion of Canaan began about 1400, the inroads of the Hebrews were contemporary with the Amarna Letters. Although controversy has raged over the historical connection between the names, it is not unlikely that the Hebrews were a part of the Habiru mentioned in this correspondence as a menace to Syria and Palestine, for it was in this weak period of Amenhotep III and of Ikhnaton's indifference in regard to the affairs of the great Egyptian Empire that control of Palestine was slipping out of the hands of the Pharaohs.

Objections to This Dating Considered - There are also objections against this 15th-century theory. It is pointed out that the date does not fit the total of the periods mentioned in the book of Judges, or the 450 years of Acts 13:19, 20 (KJV), for it is keyed to the 480 years of 1 Kings 6:1.

It is true that if all the year totals in Judges are considered successive periods, the sum is far beyond 480 years, but there is nothing in the book to rule out the conclusion that some of the judgeships were quite possibly contemporary, in different parts of the country. Since the theories of an earlier or a later Exodus dating must either squeeze the judges period into an impossibly small compass, or reconcile the 480 years with approximately 600 years by eliminating certain portions from the whole period, as has been explained, it seems reasonable to accept as literal the definite statement that Solomon began the building of the Temple in the 480th year from the Exodus, especially since the date thus arrived at, can be harmonized with the other data.

A 1445 Exodus admittedly makes it difficult to account for the 300 years mentioned by Jephthah (see Judges 11:26), but it can be done by assuming a rapid disintegration after Jephthah, with short contemporary judgeships.

As for the 450 years of Acts 13:20, there is a disagreement as to the original text of the statement, and there are differing translations of it in various versions. One reading makes the 450 years the period of the judges; the other, from different manuscripts, makes it the period preceding the judges. The second reading, regarded as better by modern scholars, is certainly more ambiguous. A literal 450-year interval between Joshua and Samuel cannot be fitted into the chronological scheme that puts the Exodus in the 15th century, for it is obviously incompatible with an interval of 480 years between the Exodus and Solomon. Those who take the long chronology (with the 480 years exclusive of the periods between the judgeships) use the 450 years similarly as the sum of only the actual administrations of the successive judges. On the other hand, those who hold the view of overlapping judges, with a much shorter total duration, can employ the 450 years, according to the other reading, as the period from the time of the seed—the beginning of the 400 years reckoned from the time when Isaac was 5 years of age. They account for the extra 50 years by the 40 years of wandering plus a hypothetical 10 years more before the judges. Both theories have difficulties and elements of personal opinion. Therefore, it has been considered that the best course is to leave this ambiguous and controversial period out of the discussion as not positive enough to be used either for or against the theory of the 15th-century Exodus.

The Eighteenth Dynasty capital was at Thebes, several hundred miles from the land of Goshen. Yet the Hebrews were living near the royal palace, according to the story of the birth of Moses and to the account of the communication between Moses, the Israelites, and Pharaoh during the extended period of the plagues (possibly as much as a year). However, there was nothing to prevent the use of a second royal residence in or near the Delta at certain times, although there is no evidence for such a capital in the period assigned to Moses.

The 13th Century advocates point out the Nineteenth Dynasty names of the cities of Pithom and Rameses. However, the proponents of an earlier Exodus regard them as later forms substituted by scribes for the earlier names of the same cities (for example, Rameses had previously been called Zoan, Avaris, and Tanis). We might similarly speak of New York as having been founded by the Dutch, deeming it unnecessary to use the old name, New Amsterdam. Indeed, those who take the name “Raamses” (Exodus 1:11) as evidence of the Exodus under Ramses II must also explain away “the land of Rameses” in Joseph’s day (see on Genesis 47:11) by a similar method. Then, if the name of the land need not be derived from the Pharaoh’s name, neither does the name of the city.

Some argue that the story of Joseph and his family’s migration to Egypt does not portray a Hyksos ruler favoring fellow-Asiatics, but rather an Egyptian rewarding a Semitic benefactor for services rendered, showing consideration to Egyptian prejudices by segregating the Hebrew shepherds in Goshen. The 15th-century advocates reply, in favor of the Hyksos dating of Joseph, that a later Egyptian Pharaoh would be too strongly anti-Semitic to bestow such high favors, and that the motive for the segregation may well have been less to spare Egyptian sensibilities than to protect the Hebrew shepherds from the ill will of their Egyptian neighbors. Similarly, Joseph’s treatment of his brethren, although cited as an objection, illustrates the Egyptianized customs of Joseph himself, paralleling what might be expected from an Egyptianized Asiatic king.

It may seem illogical to portray the nationalistic Egyptians as expelling the hated Asiatic Hyksos, yet leaving in Goshen a community of Semites who had been favorites of the foreign regime. A possible explanation would be that the Hyksos who were expelled were the oppressive ruling class, and that many of their common people may have been left behind, regarded as harmless and possibly as a source of forced labor. We know too little to dogmatize on the subject.

The absence of Biblical allusions to Egyptian overlordship or military activities in Palestine has been considered out of harmony with the Israelite occupation of the land in the 15th century and onward. Actually, the Israelites remained mostly nomadic hill dwellers until long after this period. They failed to drive out the town dwellers, and settled down outside many of the fortified cities, the centers of Egyptian control; and in the hills, they would hardly have been touched by Egypt’s coastal campaigns. Some of Israel’s neighboring enemies mentioned in the Bible were possibly acting as vassals for Egypt.

The presence of late pottery in the cemetery of Jericho has been explained as belonging to later sporadic settlements while the city lay in ruins.

Another argument of 13th-century advocates against an earlier entry of Israel is the view (based on pottery bits found only on the surface, and not universally accepted) that Edom and Moab were not then settled nations. If the Edomites and Moabites were nomads in the 13th century, the absence of pottery from that period was to be expected.

It is not to be contended that all the Exodus problems (See NOTE) can be solved at the present time, but the hindrances to arriving at a reasonable theory are not insuperable.

NOTE: Modern books that utilize the most reliable technical materials rarely deal with the pre-Exodus chronology because of the lack of adequate data for the early period, and the differing theories of the Exodus date are of limited value to most readers. H. H. Rowley, From Joseph to Joshua (London: Oxford University Press, 1950; 200 pp.), advocates a double Exodus, but is valuable for its many footnotes to sources on various theories.

On the 15-century Exodus and invasion of Canaan, see J. W. Jack, The Date of the Exodus (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1925; 282 pp.), too early for much of the archeological evidence, but useful; Millar Burrows, What Mean These Stones? (New Haven, Conn.: American Schools of Oriental Research, 1941; 306 pp.), includes a brief survey of the 15th-century theory, but prefers the 13th-century dating. John Garstang and J. B. E. Garstang, The Story of Jericho (2d ed., rev.; London: Marshall, Morgan, & Scott, 1948; 200 pp.), offered evidence from their excavations for the fall of a strongly fortified city on that site about 1400 B.C., but that dating has now been revised by the more recent findings of Dr. Kathleen M. Kenyon. According to her preliminary report, Digging Up Jericho (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1957), the walls of that city must be dated much earlier. Because of erosion and destruction of the top levels, nothing seems to be left except a part of one house and pottery from the cemetery, to indicate that Jericho had a population in the 14th century B.C.

The evidences examined seem to leave a 15th-century Exodus as a usable hypothesis for the purposes of this book—within the possibilities of the Bible narrative, and reasonably workable for the present in the framework of historical and archeological findings.

V. EARLIER CHRONOLOGIES PIVOT ON EXODUS DATE

Date of Creation Not Known - Those who attempt to trace Bible chronology from the creation to the Exodus by the patriarchal lists, the Genesis narratives, and the 430 years extending from the call of Abraham to the Exodus must assume that the patriarchal lists are complete. If the second Cainan (Luke 3:36) is added to the Hebrew list, if the possibility of gaps in the generations is allowed, or if the Septuagint enumeration is used, the patriarchal period must be longer than according to the Hebrew text (and the creation consequently earlier). Any B.C. dating of the patriarchs, by whichever method computed, would depend on the B.C. date of the Exodus. The Exodus has been placed on the basis of two premises, both to be discussed in this book: (1) the 480-year era from the Exodus to and including the 4th year of Solomon (1 Kings 6:1), and (2) the location of Solomon's 4th year by computation of the reigns of the Hebrew kings down to the time of Nebuchadnezzar. The result, as has been explained, is an Exodus date of 1445 B.C.

Since final conclusions cannot be reached, even by consistent computation from the Bible data, because of the possible undetermined variations, this book does not attempt a complete chronology. Uncertainty is better than mere conjecture or the blind acceptance of a theoretical scheme such as Ussher's. Ussher arbitrarily placed creation, and began his a.m. 1, on the evening before October 23 (the Sunday nearest the autumnal equinox) in 4,004 B.C., that is, 4,000 years before Christ's birth, which he dated at 4 B.C. This was in harmony with the old 6,000-year theory that puts 4,000 years before Christ and 2,000 years after Christ.

This "6,000-year theory" should be defined to avoid confusion: It is not to be equated with the phrase "6,000 years" that has been used by many religious writers as a rough estimate of the time elapsed since Adam. It is, rather, a prophetic theory: namely, the view that the six days of creation week followed by

the Sabbath, taken together with the statement that with God one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as a day (2 Peter 3:8), constitute a prediction that the world will last 6,000 years of sin, with the seventh thousand as the millennial Sabbath of rest.

To say that the six days of creation week give no clue to the duration of this world is not to deny their reality or to allow interpreting them as long ages. Acceptance of a literal creation does not require assigning it to an exact year. The date of creation is not known, for the chronological data in the Bible is not continuous or complete nor can it be computed from astronomical cycles.

NOTE: Unfortunately, some apologists seeking confirmation of the Bible have cited supposed astronomical cycles for proof of a precise date for creation and the first Sabbath, overlooking the fact that cycles, like circles, have no beginning or end, and that one can reckon back the regularly recurring intervals indefinitely into the unknown past without arriving at a clue to the actual beginning. One such attempt at astronomical proof, occasionally cited even as late as around 1950, was the system of a supposed astronomer, J. B. Dimpleby (1879), who set "a.m. 0" on Sept. 20, 4,000 B.C., allegedly established by cycles of planetary motions.

It is true that astronomical cycles enable us to date certain ancient events (including some in the Bible) if those events can be connected with contemporary astronomical records, especially of eclipses.

The first direct, contemporary links between Biblical years and the B.C. scale occur near the end of the kingdom of Judah, about 600 B.C., in the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, whose regnal years are astronomically fixed. Some cite an earlier date, 853 B.C., as the death year of Ahab of Israel, but the astronomical fix is not in that year; the synchronism depends on dead reckoning from an eclipse that occurred nearly a century later. In any case, from the kings of Israel and Judah back to creation, the path crosses too many areas where differences of opinion exist.

Approximate Early Dates Sufficient - Since we have a definite chronology for the later Old Testament times, especially from the time of the great prophetic periods, we should be satisfied with approximate dates for the earlier ages, where there is no fixed chronology that will pinpoint Biblical events. Estimates around the time of the Exodus and on are probably not far wrong. Even the various datings of the Exodus are not more than two centuries off in either direction from the dating adopted for this book. Earlier than that a leeway of much more would be little enough. We may watch with interest the changes in historical chronology for the more ancient periods, yet there seems little chance so far of harmonizing the early dynasties of Egypt and Babylonia, for example, with the Bible chronology—if we take the Flood into consideration. Also, the A.M. dating used in this book is approximate and not exact.

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, even though Scripture does not profess to record all history. It is heartening to see how, wherever valid tests can be brought to bear, the Scripture record stands vindicated as accurate history. Chronology, the framework of history, is given to us in the Old Testament in a form that must be translated into our mode of reckoning before we can learn its meaning; the brevity and also sometimes the obscurity of the statements regarding it prevent us from claiming to have complete knowledge, but it is certain enough in the later period—especially by the time of Daniel and Ezra—to assure us that apparent difficulties are due to our lack of understanding.

Research based on archeology has solved many problems of chronology. We may hopefully anticipate the solution of most of the remaining problems as research continues.

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SECTION ONE: HISTORY AND BIBLE CHRONOLOGY

CHAPTER ONE

ADAM, FATHER OF ALL RACES

Introduction

From the beginning of time, God appointed a perfect chronology in order that His will may be done on earth. Therefore, the Word of God, through genealogies, chronologies and prophecies, will guide you through the different periods of earth and enlighten your mind with “the key of knowledge” (Luke 11:52). God’s knowledge has been promised to all who diligently search for truth and look forward to attain wisdom. Therefore, “...Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God...” (Luke 8:10). History, Science and the Bible, is a thorough research that covers the chronology of the world since the day when Adam was created until our present time. This book will confirm that God is in control of world events and that nothing happens by chance. It will also explain God’s plan of salvation, which was ordained from the foundation of the world and continues until the end of time.

The Beginning of Time

Created by the Word of God, planet earth was intended to reproduce God’s goodness in the lives of its inhabitants. A great blessing was bestowed upon the first created beings who also inherited time as part of their patrimony. An early Biblical chronology depicts how God established the patterns for the measurements of time for our planet. On the fourth day of the Creation week, God appointed two spherical lights through which we are able to record time and chronological history. In Scripture, the sun and the moon are called, “the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night” (Genesis 1:16). In Genesis 1:14, the Bible reveals for the first time a scientific data pertaining to the cosmology of this world and presents the role that the sun and the moon play in recording time in days, months, and years:

“And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years” (Genesis 1:14).

By God’s command, the celestial spheres in our solar system were put to motion. Our planet began a daily rotation movement of 24 hours around the sun and a yearly translation movement of 360 days. Our planet’s time began to tick away from God’s creation week. Nonetheless, in its origins, the earth did not age because sin had not yet infected the world.

Chart of the Chronology of the Early Patriarchs

No.	FATHER	FATHER'S AGE	SON'S BIRTH	TEXT	WORLD YEAR
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					(A.M)
-	GOD CREATED	-	Adam	Genesis 1:26-31	1
1 st	ADAM	130	Seth	Genesis 5:3	130
2 nd	SETH	105	Enos	Genesis 5:6	235
3 rd	ENOS	90	Cainan	Genesis 5:9	325
4 th	CAINAN	70	Mahalaleel	Genesis 5:12	395
5 th	MAHALALEEL	65	Jared	Genesis 5:15	460
6 th	JARED	162	Enoch	Genesis 5:18	622
7 th	ENOCK	65	Methuselah	Genesis 5:21	687
8 th	METHUSELAH	187	Lamech	Genesis 5:25	874
9 th	LAMECH	182	Noah	Genesis 5:28	1056
10 th	NOAH	500	Shem	Genesis 5:32	1556
11 th	SHEM	100	Arphaxad	Genesis 11:9,10 The Flood	1656
12 th	ARPHAXAD	35	Salah	Genesis 11:12	1691
13 th	SALAH	30	Eber	Genesis 11:14	1721
14 th	EBER	34	Peleg	Genesis 11:16	1755
15 th	PELEG	30	Reu	Genesis 11:18	1785
16 th	REU	32	Serug	Genesis 11:20	1817
17 th	SERUG	30	Nahor	Genesis 11:22	1847
18 th	NAHOR	29	Terah	Genesis 11:24	1876
19 th	TERAH	70	Abraham	Genesis 11:26	1946
20 th	ABRAHAM	100	Isaac	Genesis 21:5	2046
21 st	ISAAC	60	Jacob	Genesis 25:26	2106

The above chart is the origin of the world chronology. It begins in year 1 when God created Adam and Eve. To number the years we add the age of the early patriarchs at the time when they procreated their progeny. So, when Adam was 130 years old, Seth his son was born; such was the world year 130. Consecutively, to the year 130 you add the age of Seth when he was 105 years old and it will give you the world year 235, when Adam's grandson Enos was born, and so on.

130 + Adam's age corresponds to the year when Seth was born
105 Seth's age when he begot Enos
= 235 Year when Enos was born

History of the Week

The Sun and the Moon are the spheres that measure time and so, we have days, months and years. But you may ask: Where does the weekly cycle of seven days come from? It is easy to think of time in terms of seconds, minutes, hours and days. Such measurements of time follow natural physical laws that God established in the universe, in the Milky Way, and in particular, in our own solar system. But the celestial spheres are not altogether autonomous, their physical laws are also subjected to the control of God. Of our Creator it is said: "It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth..." (Isaiah 40:22).

Unlike days, months and years, the weekly cycle is not measured by celestial spheres; it was and still is established by the direct word of God. It would have seemed appropriate that God had established another form of sphere such as another moon to mark the beginning and the end of a week. But God chose to establish the weekly cycle totally different from the cycles of spheres with their physical laws. By the command of God, the seven-day cycle was established (Genesis 2:2).

Adam and Eve were created with the need to worship the Creator. They were assigned common time for them to work and holy time for them to worship God. The Word of God explains:

"Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made" (Genesis 2:1-3).

The first Sabbath day began at the end of the first week in the chronology of this world. Adam and Eve had just come fresh from the hands of the Creator. They learned that earth, sun and moon determine when common time begins and ends, but God determines when the holy Sabbath begins. Thus, humans, aided by the Holy Scriptures can discern the holy from the common. Then by their own free will, they can decide to acknowledge the holiness invested in the seventh day Sabbath.

Adam Created by God in year 1

Adam and Eve believed by faith that God had created this world in seven literal days. By faith, they acknowledged that God called into existence all things by His Word, and more importantly, humanity.

“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them” (Genesis 1:27).

The Lord God, who had ordained eternal salvation for human kind, preserved in Genesis all the generations of Adam (Genesis 5:1). All races: Caucasian, European, African, Asian, Indian, Mediterranean, have a common ancestor: Adam. Adam was made in the image of God, and was created perfect. But from the day when they brought on themselves the stain of sin, Adam’s progeny would be procreated in Adam’s “own likeness, after his image” (Genesis 5:3). Had they chosen to remain loyal to God’s command, they would have preserved that blood, pure and unstained. Nonetheless, God has made all peoples of one blood. As the Scripture says: “And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation” (Acts 17:26).

The Paradise in Eden

In the eastern side of Eden (Genesis 2:8) was located the most wonderful garden that human beings could ever imagine. It was a vibrant and colorful paradise with the richest of all biodiversities in flora and fauna which God prepared for our first parents Adam and Eve. A majestic river sprang from Eden and ran towards the east to water the garden (Genesis 2:10). The river divided into four heads: the Pison river which waters the land of Havilah (Genesis 2:11), the Gihon river which waters the country of Ethiopia (Genesis 2:13); and the Hidekel and Euphrates rivers (Genesis 2:14) which run toward the east of Assyria that we will consider shortly.

In the center of the Garden was an awesome view of fragrant and embellishing trees. The Paradise also grew all sorts of flowering and fruit trees. Right in the middle of the garden there were two outstanding trees: the tree of life and the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:9). But still, the most awesome experience was the presence of God that the Edenic couple enjoyed.

The Lord had commanded the first couple to eat of the fruit of every tree (Genesis 2:16), except for one tree:

“But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Genesis 2:17).

Eve had fallen into temptation, she disobeyed the Word of God and she sinned. The serpent called Satan (Revelation 12:9) deceived Eve (Genesis 3:1). When Adam saw Eve’s despondent condition, he also tasted the forbidden fruit as Eve gave it to him. (Genesis 3:7).

Their senses were awakening to the sad awareness that they were naked.

They saw themselves “come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).

In distress and agony, they tried to cover their nakedness with aprons made of fig leaves (Genesis 3:7), but they could not remedy their spiritual condition by covering their bodies with leaves.

In His infinite love God called to Adam and Eve, but they were afraid and hid from the presence of the Lord (Genesis 3:8-9). God wanted them to understand the severity of their sin and the calamity that they had brought on themselves. Moreover, God intended them to repent and turn from their wicked way by confessing their sin to God. Instead, they blamed God for their fallen condition. Adam challenged God with the words: “The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. (Genesis 3:12).

Having called Adam and Eve to repentance, the Lord God revealed to them the mystery of the Kingdom of God. He opened to their understanding the opportunity of forgiveness in the plan of redemption. Therefore, as God passed judgment on the head of that old serpent, He also reassured Adam about His plan of salvation: “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel” (Genesis 3:15).

God provided an immediate rescue plan for humanity. From then on, we were bound to die. Nevertheless, human beings had the option to die temporarily or eternally. What a wonderful provision! The Son of God was offered as a sacrifice to make atonement for humanity. On that very day, God performed a sacrifice (Genesis 3:21), the first death in the entire universe, and with the skins, He covered the nakedness of Adam and Eve’s bodies (Genesis 3:21). The slaughtering of that lamb was a token of the eternal sacrifice of the Son of God. Adam and his progeny began to expect God’s redemption through God’s Son. But the controversy that began in Heaven when the Cherub Lucifer rebelled against God (Isaiah 14:12-14; Ezekiel 28:14-16), continued here on earth. That Cherub became what is today, Satan, and he was also expecting the fulfillment of God’s prophecy. Satan wanted to thwart the plan of salvation by killing the Son of God as soon as He would be born as a human.

God’s First Judgment on Earth

God’s first judgment on earth occurred in the center of the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve had fallen in temptation and were destitute of the glory of God. Although they had sinned, our first parents did not remain for ever in rebellion against God. They confessed their sin and through God’s offer of grace, they received forgiveness. Nonetheless, they reaped what they sowed; their fate was to die, as “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). Accordingly, God pronounced such a fateful judgment:

“In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return” (Genesis 3:19).

As their day of burial began to approach, Adam and Eve saw the dire effects of their sin in the decadence of nature. They had forfeited the tree of life and with it the hold of immortality. A new chapter was open before their lives. Now they were beholding disease, moral decadence, aging, suffering and death. Adam, however, preached of the day of God’s deliverance. Adam had brought a terrible calamity as it is written: “by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Romans 5:12). Therefore, Adam’s patrimony was sin and its consequence: the death sentence on all humanity.

Adam recognized that through God’s grace, he would live again. The message was clear as it is today; God’s providence had already made provisions for the day of redemption. He learned that the dust would

give up his dead body on the resurrection day, and like the prophet Isaiah proclaimed centuries later, he clung to the glorious hope that he would be resurrected, just as his Lord would be:

“Thy dead men shall live; together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead” (Isaiah 26:19).

The First 130 Years in World History

Religious bigotry and hatred in matters concerning worship caused the world’s first murder. The ancient record of God’s Word notes: “And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering” (Genesis 4:3-4).

The two brothers came to worship God in completely different ways. Yet God had given to them a perfect example of what worship the Lord delights to receive. In the Garden of Eden, God had sacrificed a lamb representing the offering that He was bestowing to the fallen human race. That example should have been followed by both brothers, but only the younger brother Abel brought an acceptable offering and God accepted the worship of Abel but not the false worship of Cain (Genesis 4:5). In that way, the faith of two brothers was put to the test and Cain failed. Envy, jealousy and hatred were harbored in Cain’s heart, which led him to the brutal murder of faithful Abel (Genesis 4:8). From ancient times, the earth has been a witness to the sad condition of an unending conflict between good and evil. Like Cain, worshipers in the world are seeking to please God, following their own personal understanding of what is acceptable worship to God; but to us, just like every person who has ever lived in this fallen world, God reveals His will: “He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God” (Micah 6:8). Obedience to God, rather than the dictates of one’s own mind, will always be an issue of true worship and of faith. The Scripture says: “By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh” (Hebrews 11:4).

Satan instigated Cain to kill his brother Abel as he was enraged by the prophecy of Genesis 3:15, and by killing Abel he thought to thwart its fulfillment. Satan also attempted to destroy the lineage of God’s people through whom the promised Saviour would come. But the old serpent’s scheme was frustrated, as God gave another faithful son to Adam and by his lineage the promise was fulfilled, as the Scripture says: “And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world” (1 John 4:14).

What a wonderful day it was, when in the 130th year, by God’s providence, Adam and Eve enjoyed the blessings of their hundred and thirtieth wedding anniversary when they begot Seth (Genesis 5:3). Although the Saviour was not yet to be sent into the world, that is, the seed of the promise, (Galatians 3:16) through Seth, the seed of the woman of Genesis 3:15; that is, the Redeemer would come.

Adam lived by faith and encouraged his progeny to cling to God’s promise. Therefore, Cain and Abel; Adam’s two sons, learned that the pledge of redemption was offered at the Garden of Eden and that the emblem of God’s assurance was the sacrificial lamb. But with all that knowledge Cain still clung to his own will.

Chart of the Patriarchs' Longevity

PATRIARCHS	BIRTH YEAR (A.M.)	DEATH YEAR (A.M.)	LONGEVITY	TEXT
1 st – ADAM	1	930	930 years	Genesis 1:1,27; 5:5
2 nd – SETH	130	1042	912 years	Genesis 5:3,8
3 rd – ENOS	235	1140	905 years	Genesis 5:6,11
4 th – CAINAN	325	1235	910 years	Genesis 5:9,14
5 th - MAHALALEEL	395	1290	895 years	Genesis 5:12,17
6 th – JARED	460	1422	962 years	Genesis 5:15,20
7 th – ENOCH	622	987	365 years	Genesis 5:18,23
8 th - METHUSELAH	687	1656 THE FLOOD	969 years	Genesis 5:21,27
9 th – LAMECH	874	1651	777 years	Genesis 5:25,31
10 th – NOAH	1056	2006	950 years	Genesis 5:28,9:29
11 th – SHEM	1556	2156	600 years	Genesis 11:10,11
12 th - ARPHAXAD	1656 THE FLOOD	2094	438 years	Genesis 11:12,13
13 th – SALAH	1691	2124	433 years	Genesis 11:14,15
14 th – EBER	1721	2185	464 years	Genesis 11:16,17
15 th – PELEG	1755	1994	239 years	Genesis 11:18,19
16 th – REU	1785	2024	239 years	Genesis 11:20,21
17 th – SERUG	1817	2047	230 years	Genesis 11:22,23
18 th – NAHOR	1847	1995	148 years	Genesis 11:24,25
19 th – TERAH	1876	2081	205 years	Genesis 11:26,32

20 th - ABRAHAM	1946	2121	175 years	Genesis 25:7
21 st – ISAAC	2046	2226	180 years	Genesis 35:28
22 nd – JACOB	2106	2253	147 years	Genesis 47:28

Adam’s Funeral in 930 A.M.

What a solemn and yet dreadful day it was when Adam, the world’s first preacher, died in the chronological year 930. Adam’s death shows that the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). Almost a millennium had elapsed since God’s warning and judgment was first uttered that on the day that he eats of the forbidden fruit he should certainly die. Accompanied by thousands of skeptics at his funeral, Adam’s mortal remains were laid down in his tomb. A mighty man of God succumbed to the power of death. Although Adam had waited for the promise of God’s redemption, he rested in his grave. The Redeemer had not come. His mortal remains were to mingle with the dust of the earth until resurrection day. But Adam professed the faith of Job. As it is written:

“For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.” (Job 19:25-26).

At Adam’s funeral in 930, however, there were not only skeptics but also faithful believers in God; those who eagerly awaited God’s promise of redemption. On that solemn day, there was the cream of God’s seed; great elderly dignitaries of faith, such as his 800 year old son Seth, his 695 year old grandson Enos, his 605 year old great-grand son Cainan, his 535 year old great-great grand son Mahalaleel, his 470 year old great-great-great-grand son Jared, his 308 year old descendant Enoch, his 243 year old descendant Methuselah and his 56 year old descendant Lamech.

Ninth generation patriarch Lamech, who was Noah’s father, was 56 years old in the year of Adam’s funeral. At that time, the whole world had one common language. The population had not yet been scattered abroad. Therefore, Lamech who was of the pure seed of God’s children, might have been present at Adam’s funeral on the day that the world stood still to ponder about the reality that only God has immortality (1 Timothy 6:16). Thus, the 56 year old young man Lamech contemplated with admiration the mortal remains of a sleeping giant who still waits for the day when “this mortal must put on immortality” (1 Corinthians 15:53).

Chart of the Years Adam Knew his Descendants

Patriarch’s Genealogical Position	PATRIARCH	Descendants’ Age at Adam’s Death	Adam’s age 930 minus children’s birth year	Years Adam knew his Descendants
1 st	ADAM	930	930	930 years

2 nd	SETH	800	930 - 130	800 years
3 rd	ENOS	695	930 - 235	695 years
4 th	CAINAN	605	930 - 325	605 years
5 th	MAHALALEEL	535	930 - 395	535 years
6 th	JARED	470	930 - 460	470 years
7 th	ENOCK	308	930 - 622	308 years
8 th	METHUSELAH	243	930 - 687	243 years
9 th	LAMECH	56	930 - 874	56 years

What an awesome privilege for Lamech to have known his ancestor Adam for the period of 56 years! So much wisdom about God's plan of salvation was imparted to him from the lips of the early patriarchs; that is, from first hand recipients of God's Word and specially from Adam. Lamech, in turn would instruct his son Noah in the many centuries prior to the flood regarding God's plan of salvation. He could preach the Word of God that had been cited directly from the lips of Adam. He could proclaim, "Thus says the Lord through our father Adam, whom I knew."

Enoch Walked With God

Enoch, who was the seventh generation from Adam, was born in the 622nd year. Therefore, he knew Adam for the remaining 308 years of his life. The old man Adam did not learn about his descendant Enoch's translation to heaven because that event happened in the 987th year when Enoch was 365 years old (Genesis 5:23,24), exactly 57 years after Adam's death. But the first man learned from Enoch's fervent preaching about the second coming of Christ. (Jude 1:14).

Bear in mind that the patriarch Enoch had prophesied about the second coming of Christ and also received the prophecy regarding the flood on or prior to the birth of his son Methuselah at age 65, that is, in the year 687 when Methuselah was born.

Precisely, Enoch named his son Methuselah according to his knowledge of the flood.

Although Enoch did not hear the hammerings of the construction of the ark, he was translated to Heaven 669 years before the flood, yet he gave solemn messages to his family about God's judgment.

Enoch's Way Home to Heaven in 987 A.M.

Enoch was righteous man who walked this world leaving a legacy of faithfulness and holiness to the Lord. The conduct of his holy life was a great encouragement to the life of Adam who had heard the voice of his beloved descendant Enoch as he prophesied of God's kingdom.

“And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters: And all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years: And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him” (Genesis 5:22-24).

Heaven's gates were now open, in the year 987 to receive Enoch, the man who in this world befriended God. He was the first man of two who ever entered heaven without experiencing the pangs of death. During his life, at the age of 308, he attended Adam's funeral; he belonged to one of the eight generations of faithful men who eye-witnessed Adam's burial. And again, all those great dignitaries of God who witnessed Adam's death remained alive by the time of Enoch's translation to heaven. His ancestor Seth was 857 years old, his ancestor Enos was 752 years old, his great grandfather Cainan was 662 years old, his grandfather Mahalaleel was 592 years old, his father Jared was 527 years old, his son Methuselah was 300 years old and his grandson Lamech was 113 years old.

Chart of the Age of First Patriarchs at Enoch's Translation in 987 A.M.

Genealogical Position	Patriarchs	Year 987 minus Patriarchs' birth year	Patriarch's Age at Enoch's Translation
2 nd	SETH	987 – 130	857 years old
3 rd	ENOS	987 – 235	752 years old
4 th	CAINAN	987 – 325	662 years old
5 th	MAHALALEEL	987 – 395	592 years old
6 th	JARED	987 – 460	527 years old
7 th	ENOCH	987 – 622	365 years old
8 th	METHUSELAH	987 – 687	300 years old
9 th	LAMECH	987 – 874	113 years old

God's providence allowed only those who eye-witnessed Adam's funeral to be also alive at the time of Enoch's translation to heaven. Adam's descendants could now pause to ponder the sad day of Adam's death and comparing it with the joyous day of Enoch's translation. Therefore, Enoch's departure was a testimony of God's faithfulness and of His promise of eternal life. Also remember, that Enoch prophesied about the coming of the Lord with great power and glory (Jude 1:14). Consequently, by taking Enoch alive to heaven, God was giving a powerful message that in like manner at the end of the world, on the

final day of redemption, some will also be translated without having gone down to the grave (1 Thessalonians 4:17), when, “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed” (1 Corinthians 15:52).

Of those who witnessed Enoch’s translation to heaven, Methuselah and Lamech had the greatest responsibility to educate their son Noah in all matters of faith. They should now instruct and affirm him, showing him how the Lord had guided them in the past history, while encouraging him to walk steadfastly in the path of the Lord, keeping His commandments in future generations.

120 Years of Judgment for Antediluvians in 1536 A.M.

“And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years... And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth. Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch” (Genesis 6:3, 13, 14).

Throughout history, God has revealed his plans to His honored servants the prophets concerning the destiny of this world. For a millennium, God’s untiring mercy had been proclaimed. Now, a short time of probation extending mercy of 120 years to the antediluvians was announced to Noah. But the prophecy regarding the worldwide flood had been revealed a thousand years before to his great grandfather Enoch.

God’s revelation of His judgment for the antediluvians, a revelation that was given to Methuselah’s grandson Noah, was a relief balm for the faithful Methuselah who was eagerly awaiting the fulfillment of God’s prophecies. Thus, Methuselah who had learned from his father Enoch about God’s judgment had also known many centuries before that in the year of his death God would send the worldwide flood. But God revealed to Noah the period of judgment time for the antediluvian world exactly one hundred and twenty years before the flood. To Noah, it was revealed that the remaining time of probation for the antediluvians was 120 years (Genesis 6:3). In that year 1536, the then 849 year old Methuselah also learned that he would reach the age of 969 years as he was to live through those hundred and twenty years of antediluvian investigative judgment, and he was a living testimony to the antediluvian world.

Enoch prophesied that God’s retributive judgment through a worldwide flood was coming, and in Noah’s day, the time had finally come for the prophecy to be fulfilled. Although God’s judgment had been passed, God extended His mercy and prolonged such judgment for a hundred and twenty years. Such a time was but a short period of probation, thus the Holy Scriptures state:

“And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years” (Genesis 6:3).

Methuselah remained exactly 120 more years to contemplate God’s mercy and to help his grandson Noah build the ark while he continued preaching to the antediluvians about God’s extended mercy and exhorting them regarding their need of repentance as God was about to bring His retributive judgment. In His mercy, God gave them 120 years of more fervent preaching for righteousness.

Methuselah, an old and wise man was honoured by God in that he saw God's salvation, and he regained his strength by the preaching of his grandson Noah. And now, by faith, they were building the instrument through which God would show His saving power. Like in New Testament times, to Simon, another old man, was revealed by the Holy Spirit that "he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ" (Luke 2:26). God had, in like manner, assured Methuselah that he should not die until he had seen God's way of salvation for His faithful ones. Thus, the man who lived the longest in this earth's history (Genesis 5:27), Methuselah, died in the year of the flood.

Methuselah Dies in the Year of the Flood in 1656 A.M.

The year when Methuselah died concurs with the year when God destroyed the world in the worldwide flood.

Methuselah's name carried one of the mysteries of the kingdom of God. Enoch, his father, was shown in detail everything concerning the flood. Thus, with a passionate desire to warn his contemporaries of an impending destruction coming on the world, Enoch named his son Methuselah, meaning that at the time of this child's death judgment will be sent. His name has been defined as "messenger of death" but that is far from the truth because Methuselah was a messenger of grace and hope; he warned his contemporaries about God's judgment. His name was a compound word that contained a riddle. Its meaning was: "When he dies it shall be sent." The word is a derivative of "muth" a root that means death, and "shalach" which means to send forth. The message was clear and overwhelming: that at the time of Methuselah's death, the flood would be sent. Therefore, Methuselah warned his contemporaries about the flood, even from his birth in the year 687, by his prophetic name until the year of his death in 1656 at the age of 969, in the very year of the flood.

687 + Year of Methuselah's Birth

969 = Methuselah's longevity (Genesis 5:27)

1656 Methuselah died in this year, year of the flood

Amazingly enough, Enoch's prophecy was fulfilled in God's time and Methuselah died in the very year of the flood. Methuselah earnestly pleaded with his extended families for their salvation, but the majority of his relatives rejected God's judgment message. Only Noah, one of the many grand children of Methuselah, was saved from the deluge. The Scriptures state that Methuselah had many more sons and daughters (Genesis 5:26), including his son Lamech; Noah's father, had many more children (Genesis 5:30), but of those multitudes only Noah was found righteous (Genesis 7:1), and he alone was saved with his family. Noah's brothers and sisters and his nephews and nieces rejected the warnings and perished in the waters of the flood.

Lamech's death, happening in the year 1651, five years before the death of Methuselah his father, might have been an alarming occurrence, because it was an unusual thing that children should die before their parents. But it was providentially done that way, so that Methuselah's death, after a five year gap, could be prominent, as he was the man of the prophecy. That legendary death would serve as a witness to the antediluvians that God's prophecies are faithful and his judgments true. Therefore, it was doubly outstanding to see Methuselah's long life of 969 years as he also outlived his son Lamech.

Methuselah, another mighty man of faith had succumbed to the power of death. He had been taught by his father Enoch during those 300 years of interaction between father and son. Moreover, Methuselah had known Adam for 243 years, he had interacted with the man through whom death was passed onto the rest of this world, yet, a man who was forgiven and saved by grace. From Adam, Methuselah had also learned to love the Redeemer of the world.

The Worldwide Flood in 1656 A.M.

The world had rejected God's grace and Heaven's retributive judgment had finally come upon planet earth in the year 1656. The turbulent waters flooded in from two directions; from the windows of heaven, and also from the fountains of the great deep (Genesis 7:11). One single family remained faithful to God in the whole earth. One family condemned the world by their faithfulness:

“And the LORD said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation. For yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights; and every living substance that I have made will I destroy from off the face of the earth” (Genesis 7:1, 4).

A week of prayer inside the ark, was now due for Noah and his family. He knew that they would have to wait for one whole week in the ark before the Word of God should be fulfilled (Genesis 7:4). He was six hundred years old when God commanded them to enter the ark (Genesis 7:1, 6). Little did he know that the overall time for them to remain onboard their temporal floating home would be one year and seven days until they should set foot on dry and solid land.

Noah's faith was greatly honoured, as on the day of his birthday God saved his life and the lives of his family. He was experiencing his 600th birthday when the flood hit the world in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month (Genesis 7:11). The Word clarifies it plainly that it was the same day; thus it was on the 17th day of the second month, in the 1656th year.

Baby Arphaxad Born inside Noah's Ark in 1656 A.M.

Four married couples; three of them in childbearing age, entered the three story ark (Genesis 6:16). Noah, the father of Shem, was 600 years old when God destroyed the world with a flood (Genesis 7:6). Noah's grandson Arphaxad was born during that very year of the flood in 1656, when Shem, Arphaxad's father, was 100 years old (Genesis 11:10).

Baby Arphaxad was born inside the ark. How can we be certain about this? Well, if Noah was 500 years old when he begot Shem, (Genesis 5:32) and it was Noah's 600th year of his birth when the flood came (Genesis 7:11), which was the very year when Shem was 100 years old and that he begot Arphaxad (Genesis 5:32), then, there is no doubt that the baby Arphaxad was born before they received God's command to disembark the ark. Now Peter explains that in the days of Noah, “few, that is, eight souls were saved by water” (1 Peter 3:20). However, Peter does not eliminate the possibility for a baby in arms to come out of the ark. He explains clearly that those eight souls were saved “while the ark was a preparing” (1 Peter 3:20) That is, they were the only ones saved from among the many peoples. If a baby

or babies were born inside the ark, they were not saved from among the people who perished in the deluge. You may say: Oh, but the Scriptures tell us that only eight people entered the ark (Genesis 7:13), yes it is true! However, it does not tell us how many people came out of it. It only tells us that Arphaxad was begotten when his father, who was inside the ark, was 100 years old, that is, in the year of the flood. Therefore, the baby Arphaxad, even though he was carried in arms out of the ark by his parents, was not saved from the waters; he was born in the ark after the heavy flood rain was poured down, when his parents were safely out of danger. And because it takes nine months to be born, and the baby was begotten inside the ark, they had plenty of time to wait for his birth. Remember that they spent one whole year inside the ark; from 1656 -1657; they exited the ark on the 27th day of the second month when Noah was 601 years old (Genesis 8:13-14). Of the flood year, only 40 days were the most trying ones (Genesis 7:17). The rest of the time they spent just waiting for the ark to rest on dried land. And it rested on Mount Ararat five months after they entered the ark, when the waters had receded (Genesis 8:4). And even after the ark had been stationed on solid ground, they had to wait another seven months inside the ark until they were finally allowed to set foot on that solid ground (Genesis 8:13-14). To be exact, the time inside the ark was one year and ten days; thus from the 17th day of the 2nd month in the 1656th year until the 27th day of the second month in the 1657th year (Genesis 8:14-16).

The Tower of Babel

Some years after the flood, the whole world still enjoyed the communication through a common tongue, as the Scripture reveals: “the whole earth was of one language and of one speech” (Genesis 11:1). But rebellion against God resurged; this time, the world rebelled against God because the whole earth had been destroyed with a worldwide flood. Therefore, journeying from the east, they found a valley in the land of Shinar (Genesis 11:2) where they convened with the great multitudes to build a city and a tower whose top might reach to heaven (Genesis 11:4). Their plans were designed but they needed to have a ruler to govern them, so they decided to follow the leadership of the earth’s first monarch, Nimrod, the son of Cush who “began to be a mighty one in the earth” (Genesis 10:8). Nimrod’s kingdom was established in the city of Babel in the land of Shinar (Genesis 10:10). This Nimrod was the grandson of Ham (Genesis 10:1, 6, 8), and Ham was Noah’s youngest son who was cursed by his father when Ham saw Noah’s nakedness and made mockery of the matter (Genesis 9:22, 25). Nimrod also was Noah’s great-grandson, but he encouraged the multitudes to build a tower in total defiance against God. They were scheming against God and defied God’s ruling, so they agreed: “let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth” (Genesis 11:4). Nonetheless, the very thing that they were shunning, the Lord brought upon them “because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth” (Genesis 11:9).

Chart of the Number of Years that Noah Knew his Ancestors

Patriarch's Genealogical Position	Patriarchs	Year of Death of his Ancestors minus year of Noah's birth: 1056	Number of Years Noah knew his Ancestors
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3 rd	ENOS	1140 – 1056	84 years
4 th	CAINAN	1235 – 1056	179 years
5 th	MAHALALEEL	1290 – 1056	234 years
6 th	JARED	1422 – 1056	366 years
7 th	ENOCK	987	-
8 th	METHUSELAH	1656 – 1056	600 years
9 th	LAMECH	1651 – 1056	595 years

In His great wisdom, God prepared a very convenient generation for Noah to be born. It was the right genealogical position for him to receive all the knowledge and wisdom from his ancestors' powerful minds; that is, from the third generation onward, remember that he knew his ancestor Enos for 84 years. Thus, Noah attained the wisdom from the past generations and reached down to the future generations, passing the knowledge of God on to his descendants even to the twentieth generation, as he knew his descendant Abraham for 60 years. By interacting with his ancestors, back to seven generations, Noah was the depositary of the teachings of those who were close to Adam: that is, Enos, Cainan, Mahalaleel, Jared, Methuselah and Lamech. You can see in the chart above that Noah knew his ancestors for quite a long time because those were almost millenarian people. However, he did not know his ancestor Enoch of the seventh generation because the Lord took him to heaven at the young age of 365 years, exactly sixty-nine years before Noah's birth. Nonetheless, he received the abundant wisdom of his grandfather Methuselah, of the eighth generation, with whom he interacted for the period of 600 years, from the time when this man was 369 years old until his death at the age of 969. Lastly, he was instructed in the path of the Lord by his own father Lamech, of the ninth generation, from whom he received instruction for a period of 595 years. Notice that Noah interacted with his grandfather Methuselah for a longer period of time than with his father Lamech because Methuselah outlived Lamech by five years, as Lamech died five years before the flood.

Chart of the Number of Years that Noah Knew his Descendants

Patriarch's Genealogical Position	Patriarch	Patriarch's Age at Noah's Death	Noah's Death in 2006 minus his Descendants' Birth-year	Years Noah knew his Descendants
10 th	NOAH	950	2006 - 1056	His life
11 th	SHEM	450	2006 - 1556	450 years
12 th	ARPHAXAD	350	2006 - 1656	350 years

13 th	SALAH	315	2006 - 1691	315 years
14 th	EBER	285	2006 - 1721	285 years
15 th	PELEG	251	2006 - 1755	251 years
16 th	REU	221	2006 - 1785	221 years
17 th	SERUG	189	2006 - 1817	189 years
18 th	NAHOR	159	2006 - 1847	159 years
19 th	TERAH	130	2006 - 1876	130 years
20th	ABRAHAM	60	2006 - 1946	60 years

Noah's Funeral in 2006 A.M.

Once again, the shadows of death had overpowered the life of a beloved child of God, when in the year 2006, the righteous Noah died at the age of 950 years. There, in his tomb, were laid down the mortal remains of a great prophet whose hope in God's redemption did not fade away. Noah descended to the grave with the hope that the Redeemer of the world would come and liberate him from the power of death. There laid a faithful man, who for almost a millennium had strived for the salvation of others. Now the final chapter of his life in this world had come to an end. He had witnessed the depravity and wickedness of the thousands of rebellious people who had been endowed with a free will and had chosen to fall into the traps of Satan. Humanity's abhorrence of God's righteousness had sunken Noah's world into a horrendous state of worldwide lawlessness, as it is written of the kind of man that lived in every home, as "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Genesis 6:5). But Noah was a different kind of man! Had we preserved Noah's tomb, on his epitaph would be written as it is in the Word of God: "Noah walked with God" (Genesis 6:9).

Noah's funeral could easily have been attended by all of his extended relatives that were alive on the day of his death. God would not have confused the language of his faithful children of the lineage of God's people as on the occasion when God confused the language of the different races at the tower of Babel. Therefore, Noah's funeral service was solemnly held in the language of the children of God and it would have been attended by his 450 year old son Shem of the eleventh generation, his 350 year old grandson Arphaxad of the twelfth generation, his 315 year old great grandson Salah of the thirteenth generation, his 285 year old great-great-grand son Eber of the fourteenth generation, his 251 year old descendant Peleg of the fifteenth generation, his 221 year old descendant Reu of the sixteenth generation, his 189 year old descendant Serug of the seventeenth generation, his 159 year old descendant Nahor of the eighteenth generation, his 130 year old descendant Terah of the nineteenth generation, and his 60 year old descendant Abraham of the twentieth generation.

First Hand Knowledge of God

Heaven's story of redemption was first communicated by God to Adam. That holy man of God transmitted Heaven's message onto his descendants and it was first hand; that is, secondary source knowledge in the heart of Abraham. It was the Patriarch Noah who served as the bridge that grasped such first-hand knowledge from the early patriarchs, and passed it onto his descendants, even unto Abraham. Remember that Noah had known every one of his ancestors from Enos reaching to his descendants until Abraham. Although Noah did not meet in person his ancestor Adam, Methuselah, the grandfather of Noah did and interacted with him for the span of 243 years and Noah interacted with his grandfather Methuselah for the span of 600 years. Also, remember that Lamech, the father of Noah, had known Adam for a span of 56 years, and interacted with his son Noah for a span of 595 years. Therefore, Noah had received such precious knowledge from the very primary sources and passed it on to his descendant Abraham with whom he interacted for the span of 60 years.

Therefore, the faithful accounts of the book of Genesis were verbally communicated by the very primary sources; those patriarchs who lived long lives and were almost millennial people. For that reason, the Word of God's account is certainly first-hand knowledge for us who acknowledge the birth of Israel as an offspring of Abraham, who was a secondary source recipient of that precious knowledge of the story of redemption. Therefore, the historical facts about creation, the Garden of Eden, Adam's fall, the worldwide flood and the story of redemption were almost first hand in the heart of Abraham who had known Noah, whose father and grandfather had received such fresh knowledge from Adam himself.

Chart of the Number of Years that Abraham Knew his Ancestors

Genealogical Position	Patriarchs	Year of death of ancestors minus year of birth of Abraham in 1946 A.M.	Number of years Abraham knew his Ancestors	Number of years Ancestors survived Abraham
10 th	NOAH	2006 – 1946 A.M.	60 years	
11 th	SHEM	2156 – 1946 A.M.	210 years	Shem outlived him by 35 years.
12 th	ARPHAXAD	2094 – 1946 A.M.	148 years	
13 th	SALAH	2124 – 1946 A.M.	178 years	Salah outlived him by 3 years
14 th	EBER	2185 – 1946 A.M.	239 years	Eber outlived him by 64 years
15 th	PELEG	1994 – 1946 A.M.	48 years	
16 th	REU	2024 – 1946 A.M.	78 years	

17 th	SERUG	2047 – 1946 A.M.	101 years	
18 th	NAHOR	1995 – 1946 A.M.	49 years	
19 th	TERAH	2081 – 1946 A.M.	135 years	
20 th	ABRAHAM	2121 – 1946 A.M.	175 years	His life

Noah was alive when his great-grandson Nimrod and some of his descendants began building the tower of Babel. Now, Abraham knew his ancestor Noah for the span of 60 years. Therefore, Abraham was alive to know about Nimrod and the tower of Babel because he interacted with all his ancestors even from their father Noah. Some of his ancestors were contemporaries of Nimrod; for instance, Abraham knew his ancestor Salah all the years of his life. This Salah belonged to the same generation of his cousin Nimrod. Therefore, Nimrod was also alive but scattered and with a new tongue, somewhere in some distant land all the days of Abraham's life. Because the generation of Salah still enjoyed a long life, past the 400 years range, Abraham knew about the tower of Babel from the mouth of eyewitnesses. Abraham's ancestry of Shem's lineal blood was also scattered after the confusion of their tongues in the valley of Shinar at the construction of the tower of Babel and they settled down in Mesopotamia in Ur of the Chaldeans, which was a settlement of the Semites: the descendants of Shem who spoke the Aramaic language. But the Semites were receding into idolatry, therefore, God called Abraham out of Ur to Canaan. Shem was an eyewitness of the flood and his descendants were the eyewitnesses of the tower of Babel and God's intervention in the confusion of tongues. From them Abraham also learned about God's intervention in the affairs of this world.

Abraham not only knew Noah for over half a century, but he also knew Shem all the days of Abraham's life as he knew him for 175 years. Bear in mind that Shem outlived his descendant Abraham by 35 years. Abraham also knew his ancestor Arphaxad of the 12th generation for a span of 148 years. Abraham also knew his ancestor Salah of the 13th generation all the years of his life because Salah outlived Abraham by three years. The 13th generation from Adam to Nimrod (Salah's cousin) was the generation that built the infamous tower of Babel with Nimrod as their leader. He knew his ancestor Eber of the 14th generation all the years of his life, as Eber outlived Abraham by 64 years. He also knew his ancestor Peleg for a span of 48 years. Abraham knew his great-great-grandfather Reu for a span of 78 years and his great-grandfather Serug for a span of 101 years. He knew his grandfather Nahor for a span of 49 years and he knew his father Terah for a span of 135 years.

Chart of the Age of Abraham's Ancestors when Abraham Emigrated from Haran to Canaan

Patriarch's Genealogical Position	Patriarch	Year when Abraham migrated 2021 minus Patriarchs' birth-year	Ancestor's Age in the year Abraham Migrated to Canaan
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11 th	SHEM	2021 - 1556	465
12 th	ARPHAXAD	2021 - 1656	365
13 th	SALAH	2021 - 1691	330
14 th	EBER	2021 - 1721	300
17 th	SERUG	2021 - 1817	204
19 th	TERAH	2021 - 1876	145
20th	ABRAHAM	2021 - 1946	75

Mount Ararat located in the east of Turkey is where the ark rested after the flood. From there, the descendants of Noah traveled toward the southeast until they reached the valley of Shinar where they began the construction of the tower of Babel and later built the city of Babylon in what is present-day Iraq. Traveling further south, towards what is present-day south Iraq was situated Ur of the Chaldeans; the place where the Semites had settled down and from where Abraham was called to immigrate to the land of Canaan. That whole region is called Mesopotamia because it is in the middle of two rivers; the Euphrates spoken of in Genesis and the Tigris which both rise from the east of Turkey and flow into Iraq and the Persian Gulf.

Terah's youngest son Haran, the brother of Abraham, died in the land of his birth; that is, in Ur of the Chaldeans (Genesis 11:28). Bereaved of his son, Terah took his son Abraham and the orphan Lot, his grandson (Genesis 11:31), who were also born in Ur of the Chaldeans, so they started their migration and headed northward until they reached a place called Haran; present-day Syria. But Terah decided to dwell in Haran where he finally died at a good old age of 205 years (Genesis 11:31-32). Abraham was 135 years of age when his father Terah died in the land of Haran. Nonetheless, when Abraham was 75 years of age (Genesis 12:4) and his father Terah was 145 years old, God commanded him to emigrate from Haran towards Canaan, leaving his country, his kindred and his father's house (Genesis 12:1).

Abraham Migrates Towards Hebron in 2021 A.M.

Abraham settled down in Mamre, Hebron (Genesis 13:18), which was located in the midst of Canaan (Genesis 14:14-15). The year was 2021 A.M. when Abraham settled down in Hebron at the age of 75. His ancestor Shem was 465 years old, his ancestor Arphaxad was 365 years of age and his ancestor Salah was 330 years old. While his ancestor Eber was 300 years of age, his great-grandfather Serug was 204 years old and his father Terah was 145 years of age. Therefore, all those dignitaries of Abraham's ancestry, among whom the son, grandson and great-great-grand son of Noah outlived the father of faith, were aware of God's command for Abraham to emigrate.

While in Canaan, in that same year 2021, God revealed to Abraham His prophecy pertaining to the birth of Israel as a nation and promised him as an inheritance for his seed all that his eyes could behold north,

south, east and west from his standing point (Genesis 13:14). However Abraham argued with the Lord, questioning His promise, alleging that his steward Eleazar's son would be his heir (Genesis 15:2-3). God reaffirmed him that his servant would not be the heir but his own begotten son (Genesis 15:4).

In that same year 2021 Abraham traveled further south from Canaan toward Egypt by reason of a great famine (Genesis 12:10). While in Egypt Abraham covered his true relationship with his wife Sarah and Pharaoh took Sarah to his palace (Genesis 12:15), and God plagued Pharaoh with great plagues because of Sarah (Genesis 12:17). So Abraham was deported from Egypt with all his people (Genesis 12:20).

Abraham's Prophecy of the Nation of Israel in 2021 A.M.

After Abraham's deportation from Egypt, as he had settled down in Canaan in the year 2021, God showed him a vision (Genesis 15:1) in which the prophecy regarding his seed was given. The prophecy was spoken differently to its actual fulfillment centuries later. So God revealed to the 75-year-old prophet the future of Israel; a nation from Abraham's bosom. The prophecy foretold Israel's sacred history in its beginnings and how the Israelites were to spend time in a foreign land where they would serve in slavery the last years of their stay. But the prophecy is worded as follows:

"And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years" (Genesis 15:13).

The prophecy stipulated a shorter period but in the end the Israelites' stay in Egypt was lengthened by thirty years (Exodus 12:40). As for the lengthening of such a prophetic period, the prophecy and its chronological fulfillment cannot by any means be shortened or analyzed in any other way than as it happened, or else the whole biblical chronology would be jeopardized and its prophecies spoiled. If the full period were shortened by 30 years, as it was worded in Genesis, then the prophecies regarding the coming of our Redeemer would not fall in the right chronological year, and therefore Daniel's prophecy pertaining to the end of the 2300 year period for the cleansing of the Heavenly Sanctuary (Daniel 8:14) would not fall in its exact date. Therefore, dire consequences would result, should we decide to reject God's sacred history as it happened; the whole plan of salvation would be misunderstood. Had the chronology been altered, nobody would have been expecting the birth of the Messiah on the rightful date that it was prophesied. The judgment, which has begun in the Most Holy Place in the Heavenly Sanctuary, where our Redeemer intercedes for us, would not have been understood to fall on the right date. Fortunately the Word of God gives ample evidence that the prophecy regarding Israel's sojourn in Egypt was fulfilled when the Israelites had remained in that land exactly 430 years (Exodus 12:40):

"Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years" (Exodus 12: 40).

How God Protected the Prophecies

In the past, when God revealed great prophecies, He sometimes safeguarded the message in a form that Satan, who has been kept ignorant regarding God's proceedings, would not understand and therefore would not thwart God's plan of salvation. Therefore, when Abram received his prophecy, it was worded

in a way that even he himself did not understand all the details of it. He had not begotten Isaac, he did not know about Jacob and his twelve tribes; he did not know that it was going to be Egypt – the place where his descendants would be enslaved.

The fact that Abraham was not told the name of the enslavers supports the notion that God was safeguarding His plan of salvation. The text only reveals that Abraham's "seed shall be a stranger" and it states it in the singular form; so not to give it away for the enemy. Therefore, God mentioned "thy seed" instead of saying your people. Consider the fact that from Adam's time all patriarchs had been expecting the fulfillment of the prophecy of Genesis 3:15 about the Savior, "The Seed". Consequently, God revealed accurate chronological facts to Abraham so that Biblical prophecies would be protected against God's enemies who would try to eradicate God's precious truth regarding the plan of salvation.

God, who inspired Moses to write down the wording of the prophecy spoken to the Patriarch Abraham is very careful to employ accurate words to also write down the exact span of time that Israel spent in Egypt. Therefore, Moses emphasizes the importance of knowing exact dates in order for chronological events and prophecies to be fulfilled in their due and appointed time.

Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in 2045 A.M.

In the year 2031, when Abraham was 85 years of age as they had settled down in Canaan, Sarah wavered in her faith and encouraged Abraham to sleep with Hagar her Egyptian maid in order for them to have a son. From that union between Abraham and Hagar, Ishmael was born the following year in 2032 when Abraham was 86 years of age (Genesis 16:3, 16).

Thirteen years later, in the year 2045, Abraham received the good news that Sarah his wife will give birth to their wedlock's only son Isaac. Abraham was 99 years of age and his son Ishmael was 13 years old when Isaac was born and both father and son were circumcised then. (Genesis 17:24-25). "In the selfsame day was Abraham circumcised, and Ishmael his son" (Genesis 17:26).

In that same year 2045, when Abraham was 99 years of age, the Almighty God appeared to him (Genesis 17:1). In the plains of Mamre, the Lord also revealed to Abraham that his wife Sarah was going to have a son (Genesis 18:1, 10). Then the Lord told Abraham about His judgment upon Sodom and Gomorrah and the impending destruction because of the cities' wickedness; He said:

"...Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous; I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know" (Genesis 18:20-21).

Sodom and Gomorrah were located among beautiful rivers, the land was "well watered everywhere; so splendid was its natural view that it is described "even as the garden of the Lord" (Genesis 13:10). "But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly" (Genesis 13:13). On that evening of 2045 after the Lord had visited Abraham, two angels came to save Lot from Sodom (Genesis 19:1) and they accepted Lot's invitation to lodge at his house that night. But after dinner when they were ready to lay down to sleep, the men of Sodom surrounded Lot's house with the intention to sodomize the two angels, who in the eyes of the perverse males of Sodom, were just two men (Genesis 19:4-5). The

angels struck those perverts with blindness (Genesis 19:11); but those men together with the rest of the cities were reserved for utter destruction in their unexpected and retributive punishment at daybreak.

Little did they know that judgment had already been passed and that impending destruction was coming their way at sunrise the next day; neither did they know that Abraham had been interceding for them on the noon of the day before but that there had not been found even ten righteous people in those cities for which the Lord would have spared them from destruction (Genesis 18:32). So faithless were Sodom's inhabitants that not even Lot's daughters, who were married with their families, believed the anguished pleadings of Lot to obey God and abandon the city for their own salvation (Genesis 19:14).

After a sleepless night, trying to convince his family that two angels of God had come to destroy the city (Genesis 19:13), Lot was taken out of Sodom at sunrise, and as soon as he was out of danger with his two unmarried daughters and wife "the Lord rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven" (Genesis 19:24).

Abraham's Funeral in Ephron in the year 2121 A.M.

In the year 2121, at the age of 175 (Genesis 25:7), Abraham died and although he was born in Ur (South Iraq), he was buried in Hebron (Israel) in the field of Ephron, by his sons Isaac and Ishmael (Genesis 25:9). Ishmael, whose mother was an Egyptian (Genesis 16:1), had come to the funeral from his kindred in Egypt. This Ishmael who had come to mourn his father was sent away at an early age by Abraham and "dwelt in the wilderness of Paran: and his mother took him a wife out of the land of Egypt" (Genesis 21:21). It was in the wilderness of Paran where Ishmael started his family. Ishmael is still remembered in Egypt, and one of the country's provinces bears his name Ismailia. Also in that province, the city of Naphish is called after the name of Ishmael's son Naphish (Genesis 25:15). Just like the Word of God says, the towns in that province were called after the names of Ishmael's sons (Genesis 25:16).

Abraham, the father of faith, was the bridge that grasped so vast a knowledge of the plan of salvation from his ancestors and passed it on to his descendants, even onto Israel – the depositary of the oracles of God. He had known the Patriarch Noah for the last 60 years of his life – the man who built the ark. Thus, Abraham, who was 60 years of age, might as well have been present at the funeral of Noah. The burial of Noah took place somewhere in the Semitic region. Mesopotamia was the Semite route; that is, it was the region where the descendants of Shem had spread. It was in that region where Abraham had interactions with all his ancestors from whom he was encouraged to uphold the faith of God's seed. Abraham had relatives in Ur, from where he traveled northward, and tracing the route of his Semitic ancestry he arrived with his father Terah in Haran. In Haran, he remained for a time where he had the opportunity to visit and interact with many of his ancestors while he also acquired much wealth and servants (Genesis 12:5). But at the age of seventy five, he was commanded by God to emigrate away from his country, his kindred (ancestors) and his father's house (Genesis 12:1).

That country spoken of as Abraham's father's house from where Abraham emigrated, was Syria; the region was called Padanaram and the city was called Haran. Abraham's son Isaac married Rebekah, the Syrian of Padanaram (Genesis 25:20), the granddaughter of Nahor (Genesis 22:20-23). It was also Syria to which Jacob fled from the fury of his brother Esau – from Beersheba, the city of Abraham (Genesis 22:19), to Haran (Genesis 28:10) the city of the children of Nahor. It was in Syria where Jacob married

the Syrian Rachel, the great granddaughter of Nahor. You see how Jacob was the son of a Syrian woman and the husband of a Syrian woman. No wonder God commands Israel to acknowledge their Syrian roots:

“And thou shalt speak and say before the LORD thy God, A Syrian ready to perish was my father, and he went down into Egypt, and sojourned there with a few, and became there a nation, great, mighty, and populous” (Deuteronomy 26:5).

CHAPTER TWO

EGYPT: AN EXODUS TO FREEDOM

“And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you” (Exodus 3:14).

Shem Dies at Age 600 in the Year 2156 A.M.

Imagine what a multitudinous gathering of the Semitic people from the regions of what is present-day Lebanon, Syria, Turkey, and Iraq, who attended the funeral of their ancestor Shem, who died at the age of 600 in the year 2156. Abraham could not attend because he had died 35 years earlier. Isaac was 110 years old and living in Beersheba (Canaan). The 50-year-old Jacob was living in Haran, Syria; so he could attend his ancestor's funeral.

Chart of the Number of Years that Jacob Knew his Ancestors

Genealogical Position	Patriarchs	Year of death of ancestors minus year of birth of Jacob in 2106 A.M.	Number of years Jacob knew his Ancestors
11 th	SHEM	2156 – 2106	50 Years
13 th	SALAH	2124 – 2106	18 Years
14 th	EBER	2185 – 2106	79 Years
20 th	ABRAHAM	2121 – 2106	15 Years
21 st	ISAAC	2226 – 2106	120 Years
22 nd	JACOB	2253 – 2106	147 Years (His Life)

The Semitic Route

The Semites were established and spread along the Mesopotamian region, and the Semitic route was later elongated by the journey of Abraham toward Canaan to the west of Mesopotamia. Both Abraham and his grandson Jacob had to emigrate from their homeland to reach the cradle of Shem's seed. Abraham journeyed on the eastern side and Jacob on the western side of the Syrian Desert to reach Haran in Syria. God brought Abraham from the southeastern land of Ur to Haran; He also brought Jacob from the southwestern land of Canaan to Haran. Now you may ask... for what purpose did God bring those patriarchs to Syria? Well, God intended the descendants of Shem to interact with their ancestors and thus develop a

solid foundation of their faith. Although Abraham was not alive to attend the funeral of Shem, he had known him in life. Abraham also interacted with his ancestor Noah; remember that Abraham was 60 years of age when Noah died. If Abraham emigrated from Ur of the Chaldeans to Haran before the death of Noah, and we know that he remained there until the 75th year of his life, it was for the purpose of interacting with his ancestors. Therefore, if Noah lived in Haran or in any surrounding villages, it would have been easier for Abraham not only to interact with Noah but also to attend Noah's funeral.

Notice God's providence even towards Ham who was cursed by Noah. To all the places where the children of Ham had spread, God sent His children of the lineage of Shem - even to Babylon, Nineveh, Sodom and Gomorrah. Of the children of Ham, two are well-known for having produced nations that rebelled against God: Cush and Canaan (Genesis 10:6). Cush, for instance, was the father of Nimrod who built Babel (Genesis 10:10), which later became Babylon in Mesopotamia; he also built Nineveh (Genesis 10:11) on the other side of the Tigris River near the border of present-day Iraq and Turkey. Canaan, on the other hand, was the father of the Canaanites who built Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 10:19), which were located near the Dead Sea between Israel and Jordan. In all the settlements of the children of Ham, Abraham the descendant of Shem, gave testimony of his faith and traveled the lands of the apostate children of the world. He could witness first-hand the work of rebellion at the construction of the tower of Babel. But under God's guidance, he emigrated towards Canaan and settled down in the plains of Mamre (Genesis 18:1; 19:28); in the mountainous region of Hebron (Genesis 13:18), from where he interceded for his family in Sodom (Genesis 18: 25-26).

Israel Settles Down in Egypt in 2236 A.M.

Remember that God did not allow Abraham to settle down in Egypt, when there was a famine in his days (Genesis 26:1). God also forbade Isaac to journey into Egypt when there was another famine (Genesis 26:2). But with Jacob it was a totally different story:

“And he said, I am God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation” (Genesis 46:3).

It was in the year 2236 when God estimated it necessary that the children of Israel emigrate from their homeland Beersheba in Canaan (Genesis 46:5) to Goshen in Egypt (Genesis 47:1). They emigrated because of the great famine that hit the whole world, which was more severe in the land of Egypt and surrounding nations. (Genesis 41:56). But more importantly, Israel departed to Egypt so that the prophecy spoken to Abraham might be fulfilled. To Abraham God promised: “I will make of thee a great nation...” (Genesis 12:2). On the day when the 130-year-old Jacob established himself with his family of seventy members in Goshen, God's promise for Abraham and Israel began to be fulfilled. Consequently, the promise given to Abraham was fulfilled a long time after Abraham's death, when God commanded Jacob to leave Canaan and settle down in Egypt. Therefore, the text in Genesis 46:3 is emphatic “for I will there make of thee a great nation”; that is, when the Israelites were in Egypt, and never before that time. Therefore, Israel enjoyed the beginnings of nationhood in 2236; the year when they set foot on Egypt's ground. From then on, they increased in number (Exodus 1:7).

Exponential Hebrew Population Growth

As soon as the children of Israel touched Egyptian soil, they began growing in exponential numbers. An adjective, an adverb and a verb describe the manner of explosion growth that the children of Israel experienced to become a nation. Consequently, they “were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied” (Exodus 1:7). The marvelous Hebrew population growth became so prominent that the king of Egypt exclaimed with fear: “Behold the children of Israel are more and mightier than we” (Exodus 1:9). They had become a great and powerful nation inside Egypt so that the Egyptian authorities concocted diverse means of reducing the Hebrew population. As Egypt’s sovereignty could not contain Israel’s population growth, they resorted to implement corporal punishment and forceful slave labour. But such measures only stirred up the Israelites’ longing for greater growth, and Egypt’s demography continued to be modified by the Hebrew nation. Thus, the Holy Scriptures depict the Hebrew situation:

“But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew. And they were grieved because of the children of Israel” (Exodus 1:12).

Starting with 70 people at the time of arrival in Egypt (Exodus 1:5), Israel’s population began an exponential growth that continued for the next 430 years. After more than four centuries had elapsed, it would number 603,550 male adults twenty years and over (Numbers 1:20-46).

The Prophet Moses Born in 2586 A.M.

The time was soon approaching for Israel’s deliverance, and Satan, who was conscious of the prophecy of redemption through the Messiah, became very active in his desperate hope to thwart God’s plans. Through his right arm Pharaoh, he devised a ploy to hinder the progress of Israel in becoming a great nation by inflicting slavery on them (Exodus 1:11). Then Satan schemed a wicked plan to slaughter the Hebrew male born children through strict orders given to their midwives (Exodus 1:16). Such a tactic did not work because the chosen midwives for that terrible task were pious women who feared God and disregarded Pharaoh’s orders. Therefore, Satan carried out a new scheme, through Pharaoh, who passed a mandatory law enforcing all Egyptian citizens to cast into the river all the male born Israelite babies (Exodus 1:22). It seems that Satan was afraid of something bigger as he exhausted all means through all his ploys to intercept God’s plan. Many children were slaughtered and drowned in the Nile river, yet God protected His deliverer.

Moses was born in the year 2586. It is fascinating how God used Pharaoh’s daughter to accomplish His plan of deliverance for Israel. In vain did Satan use Pharaoh to try and thwart God’s plan. Pharaoh’s daughter named the baby Moses (Exodus 2:10). Although Moses had an Egyptian name, he was reared with a strong faith in the God of Abraham by his biological mother (Exodus 2:8).

The Israelites had been taught by their forefathers that by Divine providence Israel should remain in Egypt for 400 years, part of which they would spend under Egyptian bondage. This was to be prior to the repossession and inheritance of the land of Canaan. But the children of Israel who lived to see God’s deliverance and the fulfillment of the prophecy given to Abraham, had to seek God’s will. They knew about the prophecy; but did they really understand the elements of its fulfillment?

Moses Becomes a Fugitive in 2626 A.M.

Regardless of the spiritual condition of the people of Israel, Moses made preparations for the fulfillment of the prophecy and he became the deliverer of God's people, because he was educated in accordance with the precepts of God. He was claimed and legitimized as a son by the Pharaoh's daughter, yet as he was a Hebrew, he strived to maintain close connection with his people (Exodus 2:7-10).

Living in the palace, Moses had a clear knowledge that God had appointed him to be the deliverer of His people Israel. Thus, he was anxiously waiting for the fulfillment of the prophecy spoken by Abraham concerning the period of four hundred years. Somehow, he had come to understand that on the day of his birthday, when he should turn exactly forty years of age, he would bring liberation. Thus the Scriptures speak of Moses in such a way:

“And when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel” (Acts 7:23).

Moses visited his people on the day of his fortieth birthday in the year 2626. This is evidenced in the phrase “when he was full forty.” He intended to associate himself with his people and let them know that God would bring deliverance under his leadership.

Like every good warrior, he hoped to employ his diplomacy to gain adherents to the movement of emancipation that should get momentum sooner or later. But first, he had to win his brethren the Israelites' affection and confidence before he could give them directions. He had decided to visit them with the ideal of presenting himself as one with them, so that they could understand that one of the princes sitting at Pharaoh's table was on their side. Although, he displayed the outward trappings of the idolatrous Egyptian royalty and was literate in the culture and religion of that pagan nation, he was a faithful believer in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; thus a worshiper of the God of his brethren, the children of Israel.

Moses wished to give his people a sign that he was one of them and that deliverance was on its way. He wanted to prove to them that he had no spiritual connection with the Egyptian dominance. He wished to demonstrate to them that he was led by a different spirit than that shown by his palace peers. Accordingly, when visiting his brothers, as he encountered a Hebrew who was being beaten by an Egyptian superintendent, Moses grasped his first opportunity to give the Israelites an indication that through him God had a plan to overthrow the Egyptian oppression. Thus he ventured into slaughtering the Egyptian in the sight of the only witness, the mistreated Hebrew (Exodus 2: 11,12).

But no rushed conspiracy was to play a pivotal role in bringing about the deliverance of God's people. Obtaining royal and priestly education, Moses was received as an Egyptian prince, yet he knew very well that he himself was a Hebrew, and he was also waiting the time for the liberation of the people of Israel. He understood that he played an important part in God's plan of deliverance. So, the Scriptures state: “And it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown...” (Exodus 2:11). What happened in those days? Well Moses who had been expecting the fulfillment of the prophecy, jumped ahead of God and made a mistake; he killed an Egyptian man (Exodus 2:12).

It is very easy to just think that Moses made a big mistake and get the matter over with. But the children of Israel made an even bigger mistake. On occasion of his visit to the children of Israel, Moses was

hopeful that the Hebrews should be expecting his visit, but more importantly, he expected that the children of Israel would know that the fulfillment of the prophecy was at hand. He wanted to further confirm to them that God was bringing deliverance through him. In slaying the Egyptian, Moses had hoped that it was enough of a sign for them to understand that he was one with them and that he was God's appointed deliverer. Obviously they did not see this as a sign of deliverance, which reveals that they were not ready to receive emancipation. The Scriptures state the reason as to what prompted Moses to defend the Hebrew slave in such a way that he even smote the heartless Egyptian to death:

"For he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them: but they understood not" (Acts 7:25).

Israel had not made preparations for the fulfillment of the prophecy because, in their minds, God's promise had fallen into oblivion. They were totally unaware that God had intended for them to remain in Egypt only the 400 years that Abraham had prophesied of. They had neglected to make preparations regarding the prophecy because they had not understood God's Word. The problem was not just that Moses slaughtered the Egyptian, but that the people of Israel had failed to understand God's plan of deliverance.

Moses' Disappointment by Prophecy's Postponement

When Moses killed the Egyptian, he was 40 years old (See Acts 7:23); exactly ten years prior to the accomplishment of 400 years of Israel in Egypt as anticipated in the Genesis prophecy. So it appears that Moses expected to be the deliverer of Israel when the span of 400 years should elapse. But just a decade before the fulfillment of that prophecy, all Egypt knew was that Moses had slaughtered an Egyptian man. He had to flee as a fugitive out of Egypt because Pharaoh wanted to kill him (Exodus 2:15). Consequently, he remained 40 years in the desert herding flocks in Midian (Exodus 3:1; Acts 7:30) until he should return to Egypt at the age of 80 (Exodus 7:7) for his second attempt at liberating his people Israel. Finally, Moses lived for 40 more years in the wilderness leading the people of Israel until his death when he was 120 years old (Deuteronomy 34:7).

Prominent in the life of Moses is the number 40. Could it be possible that he considered that at the age of forty he would begin to deliver Israel? Did he consider it relevant the fact that it took forty days and forty nights for the outpouring of the great worldwide flood of Genesis 7:12? Did Moses also consider the significance of Noah's action in opening the ark's window forty days after the ark touched ground? (Genesis 8:6). Did he think it was relevant that Isaac's age of forty at the time of his wedding should be also mentioned? (Genesis 25:20).

Moses knew that ten remaining years were still pending; ten years should pass until the fulfillment of the 400-year prophecy. Moreover, he understood that he was the chosen person to carry out the deliverance of the people of Israel. Somehow, he had come to understand that the number forty had something special. But he did not figure out that the forty days and forty nights of the great deluge had some special meaning for the outcome in Moses' personal life.

Looking retrospectively, Moses could understand what happened to the prophecy given to Abraham. There had been a 30-year postponement for its fulfillment; there was therefore a disappointment for the

faithful Moses. The prophecy had been contingent or conditional on the actions of Moses while in Egypt. But more importantly the prophecy was conditional on the attitudes and position taken by the children of Israel. Therefore the delay caused a great disappointment; the prophecy of deliverance must now be fulfilled only after another forty years should pass.

By faith Moses had waited for the time of the end of Israel's slavery. He had considered that the beginning of the movement for deliverance should go forward at the time when he should turn forty years of age. But in Moses' mind was not just the end of Egyptian bondage that had prominence; he was eagerly waiting for the prophecy to be fulfilled exactly as promised to Abraham. Thus, for the first forty years of his life, and even when living in the Egyptian palaces, he was willing to become the spiritual leader of the children of Israel.

"By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ's greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward" (Hebrews 11:24-26).

The Scripture says "By faith Moses..." this was not the faith of the people of Israel for they were not making preparations for God's deliverance. But in faith Moses had waited for the first forty years of his life, hopeful to take a central part in the fulfillment of such a wonderful prophecy. Sadly, the time had come and gone. Now Moses could ponder about what went wrong. Did God anticipate this great disappointment?

Great was the disappointment of Moses who in the desert would ponder the outcome of the recent events back in Egypt. Forty long and gloomy years were now due for Moses, who knew very well that God had indeed rescued him from the waters of the Nile, and that his life had been preserved for a special mission of deliverance for Israel.

The prophecy had been postponed because of the unbelief of God's people. They had failed to understand that God was sending them a deliverer; but more than that they had failed to keep the faith in God and therefore they had failed to make preparations for the fulfillment of God's prophecy. Thus, God allowed Moses to also make a mistake that for the next forty years would be the great disappointment of his mind.

In great disappointment, Moses had to flee as a fugitive, knowing that his dream had not come true. It was a terrible blow for this faithful man of God. Living in solitude, he settled down in a remote place in the desert as he started a humble family. He began a new life; leaving the palace and royalty to become a commoner in the fields, working as a shepherd herding sheep. Thus, his dream to bring deliverance for the people of Israel had been crashed, at least for the next forty years.

Greater than his disillusionment were the doubts beginning to creep into his mind. Could it be that the prophecy was not meant to be fulfilled as he had understood it? Perhaps God had not chosen him to be the leader in the great movement of liberation? What if the people of Israel were not meant to be emancipated at the end of the four hundred years? Did he act naïvely in defending the Hebrew slave? Was he totally responsible for the failure in the fulfillment of the prophecy?

But as we have seen, the real culprits were the children of Israel. They had not understood the prophecy and had not inquired of the Lord as to who was God's appointed deliverer. They should have realized that

Moses, even when he shared the comfort of Egyptian royalty was indeed a true Israelite, descended from a Hebrew family of the tribe of Levi. His close family members with whom Moses had not broken connection were his older brother Aaron (Exodus 4:14) and his sister Miriam.

Yet the Hebrews ignored the facts; God was offering them help, but brought further harm to themselves by spreading the false news of sedition on the part of Moses whom they were not willing to accept as their leader. It is evident that they refused to accept Moses; but the terrible matter was deeper than that; they did not yet have the predisposition of accepting God's guidance. Consequently, the Hebrews questioned God's providence: "Who made thee a prince and a judge over us (Exodus 2:14)?" Yet God did not forsake His people, His Word says:

"And when forty years were expired, there appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai an angel of the Lord in a flame of fire in a bush" (Acts 7:30).

After the forty years had passed God appeared to Moses, Who commanded him to go back to Egypt and liberate His people. At that time, Israel's generation that saw God's providence understood the necessity of pleading with God in prayer for deliverance. Living in slavery, they felt compelled to turn to God. Whether they understood that the number of years stipulated in the prophecy had reached its culmination, or whether they pleaded with God just because of the rigorous enslavement, God knows. Thus in regard to the fulfillment of God's promise, the children of Israel beseeched the Lord with all their heart so that God's holy plan of deliverance should be expedited.

The time had passed for the prophecy's fulfillment, and the people of Israel began praying to God for deliverance. God heard their supplications, which went to Heaven in the form of groanings, sighs and cries. It appears that they prayed to God by reason of the bondage and not because they understood Abraham's prophecy of 400 years, which was extended to 430 years. Notice that the word 'bondage' is repeated twice:

"And it came to pass in process of time, that the king of Egypt died: and the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob" (Exodus 2:23-24).

Right after departing Egypt, Moses commanded twelve princes to go and search Canaan. "And they returned from searching of the land after forty days" (Numbers 13:25). Because of the spies' unbelief which Israel collectively joined in murmur and reproach against God, the Lord punished them, just like he did to Moses: "After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years, and ye shall know my breach of promise" (Numbers 14:34). Did the Lord breach His promise? Yes, He did! And it was because of Israel's unbelief, which happened twice, once when Moses defended the Hebrew slave and secondly when they joined the unfaithful princes who brought an evil report against God. Just like Moses passed 40 years in the wilderness also Israel needed to spend 40 years in a desert that would teach them obedience and respect for the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel.

Israel's 430 Years Sojourn in Egypt

While in Genesis the prophecy signaled 400 years of Israel's sojourning in a foreign land (Genesis 15:13), in the book of Exodus the actual fulfillment was not until a span of 430 years had elapsed. Now, the children of Israel were faced with a prophecy whose fulfillment was conditional on their faith. Exodus 12:40 is, therefore, relevant to our understanding of God's prophecy given to Abraham. It is an elucidation that clarifies the fact that God's prophetic Word in that regard was intended for the children of Israel living in Egypt. The text uses a phrase that leaves no doubt that the prophecy of the 430 years for Israel under the Egyptian slavery was aimed to include only the people of Israel who grew to become a nation while in Egypt. The explanatory phrase "who dwelt in Egypt" makes it crystal clear that the span of 430 years for Israel's sojourning in Egypt began its counter at the very first day when the 130-year-old Jacob and his family entered Egypt.

"Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years" (Exodus 12:40).

We have seen how the Word of God explains that the prophecy of the 430 years begins with Jacob and not with Abraham. Abraham and Isaac did not enter Egypt, to settle down there and become a nation. Jacob, on the contrary did enter Egypt to become a nation. In the Biblical accounts, we find that God's repetition of historical facts confirms our faith in God's truth and it leaves no space for falsity, misrepresentation, or distortion of the Word of God. Moreover, every time that a repetition of a Biblical fact is given, it is added extra information in it.

Once again, God reiterates historical facts to affirm and confirm the trustworthiness of His Holy Word. The previous verse has already stated that the sojourn of Israel in Egypt was 430 years. Now Exodus 12:41 restates the same fact with a little extra detail which is an eye opener for understanding the prophecy. It states:

"And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt" (Exodus 12: 41).

When God repeats one fact, He intends to awaken His people's minds in order for them to keep focused as to what eventuated in divine history. God encourages and persuades His remnant people to reason together with the Lord, in this case as to why the prophecy was not fulfilled on the anticipated date as He had told Abraham. Most certainly, God is faithful to His word and His truth is absolute. Nonetheless, certain people fail to understand and thus prevaricate from God's truth. Consequently, it is immensely imperative that God's faithful people follow the command of the Lord, as He encourages us to "Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding" (Proverbs 23:23). We should pay attention to God's reiteration of historical facts because God repeats historical facts for a reason.

Apart from the fact that God is repeating that the period of the children of Israel in Egypt was 430 years, the Word of God uses three meaningful phrases in Exodus 12:41. For instance: "and it came to pass," meaning that the marvelous prophecy revealed by God and prophesied by Abraham 645 years earlier, had providentially been fulfilled. The prophecy had been given to Abraham when he was commanded to depart from Haran at the age of seventy-five years (Genesis 12:4) in the year 2021 A.M. (for reference see the chart). And this prophecy began to be fulfilled in the year 2236 A.M. when Israel (Jacob) was 130

years old (Genesis 47:9). But there are some people preaching that Israel sojourned 215 years in Egypt when the Word of God clearly states that it was 430 years. Let us reason together with the Lord.

With the phrase “at the end of the four hundred and thirty years” God refreshes our minds with the fact that the Israelites spent a full span of 430 years in Egypt. This phrase also alludes to the original prophecy, and it does it with the emphatic article “the” which gives the specificity that this text is connecting Exodus 12:40 with Genesis 15:13.

God always fulfills His divine plans in His appointed time. The Exodus happened exactly on the day when Israel was completing 430 years in their residence in Egypt. The phrase: “even the selfsame day” gives us an indication that God wants us to pay attention to the chronological data. It shows that He is a God of discipline and order. The Bible prophecies were fulfilled in the moment when God attended to His appointment with us. Bear in mind that in God’s chronology, the main focus is the redemption of this world. Therefore, the Biblical chronology must have a solid foundation in order that the Messianic prophecies given in the Law and the Prophets might be understood as fulfilled in the exact time as God had preordained.

The Exodus: God’s Liberation of Israel from Egypt in 2666 A.M.

How wonderful it was in the year 2666 when God brought liberation to His people Israel as “they departed from Rameses in the first month, on the fifteenth day of the first month” (Numbers 33:3). They were liberated from their Egyptian enslavers, who under the leadership of Satan and Pharaoh, had attempted to annihilate the last vestiges of faith in the children of Israel. But it was a dreadful year for the enemies of God, as Satan and his hosts were defeated; their vain religion was shamefully exposed and their wicked Egyptian nation was devastated. God brought retribution upon Egypt for having accepted Satan’s pantheistic religion of worshiping demons. It was Satan’s plot to induce the nations against God’s plan of salvation and God’s doctrines pertaining to the Heavenly Sanctuary. Pharaoh himself was worshiped by the deluded Egyptians; he had taken the prerogative that only belongs to God. Therefore, God brought ten terrible plagues that devastated Egypt’s fragile economy and their futile religion (Exodus 7:20- 11:8).

The last plague was the most devastating one. And in order for God’s people to escape the last plague they needed to heed and obey God’s requirements. The Israelites had to sacrifice an unblemished male lamb (Exodus 12:5), and mark their houses with the blood in three different parts of the house: in the two side posts and on the upper door post (Exodus 12:7). They also had to eat the Passover lamb with staff in hand, shoes on feet and loins girded (Exodus 12:11), and await God’s great deliverance. When God revealed to His people, His plan for that solemn night, He said:

“For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD” (Exodus 12:12).

Gathering the Israelites for one of the most holy convocations in the history of the world, Moses related to his people God’s laid-out plan of deliverance and assured them protection through the approaching night of impending judgment. They were to heed and obey carefully, in detail, all the commands of God and to

go unhesitatingly and without delay and act promptly on the rest of that day and for what lay ahead for the night. The meeting had to be held and the instructions given, on the very day of their departure. “And the children of Israel went away, and did as the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron, so did they” (Exodus 12:28). The children of Israel sacrificed their Passover and fixed their faith on the Messiah, the true Passover Lamb who saved His people from their sins.

God’s Retribution at Midnight

“And Moses said, ‘Thus saith the LORD, About midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt: And all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sitteth upon his throne, even unto the firstborn of the maidservant that is behind the mill; and all the firstborn of beasts” (Exodus 11:4-5).

It is significant that God chose the hours around midnight to show His power and bring retribution upon Egypt and its demonic doctrines and practices. The Egyptians regarded in high esteem the hours of midnight in which they celebrated their pagan rituals. In paganism, the hours of midnight mark the beginning of a new day; but this common knowledge is against the Word of God.

The God Who created time, commanded that a day begins at sunset, not at midnight as the pagan religions teach. Therefore, from the creation day when God created the world, He began counting days beginning with the sunset. “And the evening and the morning were the first day.” (Genesis 1:5). Likewise, for the observance of the Sabbath, the day of the Lord (Genesis 2:2, Mark 2:28), the people of the Exodus coming out of Egypt should relearn that the seventh day should be kept beginning at sunset and ending at sunset next day. Therefore, the command was given to the emancipated Hebrew people: “... from even unto even, shall ye celebrate your Sabbath” (Leviticus 23:32).

So the people of God were reminded in the year of the Exodus in 2666 that a day begins and ends at sunset. They Israelites celebrated their ceremony in the evening (Exodus 12:6); and one and a half millennia later, on the day of the Lord Jesus’ crucifixion, God’s people still remembered that a day, in this case the Sabbath day, spans from sunset to sunset. The gospel reads: “And now when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the Sabbath” (Mark 15:42), “and the Sabbath drew on” (Luke 23:54), “And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the Sabbath day according to the commandment” (Luke 23:56). Therefore, God appointed that a day begins at sundown.

Death at midnight was therefore God’s final judgment against the Egyptian’s observance of occult times, carnivals and wicked practices. God also commanded His people to refrain from such satanic practices as the use of enchantments, the observance of times (Leviticus 19:26), consulting familiar spirits, seeking the wizards (Leviticus 19:31), and making tattoos in the skin for the dead (Leviticus 19:28).

Pharaoh knew that more than one death would occur in every Egyptian house at midnight during the tenth and final plague. That was not a normal night, it was a night of retribution, and the Egyptians had been forewarned. Therefore, they feared the dreadful premonition until about midnight when the Lord went out into the midst of Egypt and all the firstborn in Egypt died from the firstborn of Pharaoh to the firstborn of the servants and beasts (Exodus 11:4,5). And all Egypt kept awake with a great mourning as never before (Leviticus 11:6). The Word of God states:

“And it came to pass, that at midnight the LORD smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the firstborn of the captive that was in the dungeon; and all the firstborn of cattle” (Exodus 12:29).

It was midnight when in sorrowful groaning and anguished wailing all Egyptians voiced their hopeless cry for their many dead loved ones throughout the country. The Egyptians were punished by the tenth and last plague that visited their wickedness.

“And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he, and all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt; for there was not a house where there was not one dead” (Exodus 12:30).

God Executes Judgment on All the Egyptian gods

God’s wrath in condemnation and repugnance against Egyptian idolatry in all its forms was revealed with the last plague. Necromancy was the demonic custom in Egypt to conjure the spirits of the dead. This was a country of many necromancers, the conjurers of demons through the practice of invoking the so called spirits of the realm of death. Demonic cults and rituals to the dead were performed in Egypt. Their wickedness had led them to adopt and give shape to devilish creatures such as Anubis the god of the dead having a human body and a jackal head. Osiris was the Egyptian governor of the underworld of the dead. Thus, the Egyptians had developed a strong fondness for rituals regarding death.

The Egyptians had practiced a pantheistic religion producing their own gods by the amalgamation of human and animal creatures. Consequently, Bastet was represented as a woman with a cat’s head, Hator was worshiped as a woman with a cow’s head, Horus was represented as a man with a hawk’s head, Isis was depicted as a woman with a cow’s horns, Mut was a woman with the head of a vulture, Ra was represented by a man with a hawk or a bull’s head, Sekhmet was represented by a woman with the head of a lion, and Apis was a bull. In fact, the Egyptians had their temples to those devilish gods, but in effect they worshiped and had great veneration for their representative animals.

Those who had a great fondness for death and the realm of the dead were visited by a terrible plague that saw the slaughtering of all the firstborn in Egypt, those of the animals and humans. The end of an era had begun for Egypt; their religion was in turmoil, all the Egyptian gods had been killed. Those who had disdained the true God, against whom they had hardened their hearts, were now confused and alarmed. Puzzled with such a great havoc they sank in hopelessness for they had come to the realization that their religion was empty and vain. By the hundreds of thousands, their loved ones perished under the dominion of death, and to make things worse, their gods were now dead. Could they now comprehend that they had cherished a dead religion? Would they still cling to their demon gods who had failed to protect them? Thus, the Egyptians’ hope was shattered; their faith had crumbled.

After the mournful night of death in Egypt, and on the following day, their day of mourning, the Egyptians: royalty, governors, priests, armies, magicians, and commoners; all with no exception, buried their dead in distress and sorrow. With mixed feelings of anger, anguish and hopelessness, they could not help but bury their dead loved ones and their dead animals that they esteemed as gods. They even buried their royal princes, some of whom would have become pharaohs themselves.

“For the Egyptians buried all their firstborn, which the LORD had smitten among them: upon their gods also the LORD executed judgments” (Numbers 33:4).

Egypt’s gods: Isis, Horus and Set (IHS) were judged at this time. Their futile religion was powerless and meaningless; their pagan representations in the form of unclean animals had been slaughtered. Now these devils; whose names still remain in vogue today, had been judged before the eyes of human worshipers. But when the Lord Jesus was crucified on the cross of Calvary, these same devils, and the rest of the demons together with Satan, were judged before the eyes of God’s holy angels and the whole universe as they contemplated our Redeemer, whose character of love had emptied Himself to become a human being in order to save the fallen human race. Our Lord Jesus, a few hours before His execution pronounced this sentence: “Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out” (John 12:31).

Regarding such a terrible day of visitation for the Egyptians, Elihu had uttered the prophecy of its impending judgment. A judgment carried out in the darkest hours of midnight, a midnight of wickedness for the Egyptians, and midnight in actual time. They could not hide themselves from the appointed time of judgment from God. Thus, God had opened up this mystery, even from the days of Job through the utterance of Elihu, one of Job’s friends:

“In a moment shall they die, and the people shall be troubled at midnight, and pass away: and the mighty shall be taken away without hand. For his eyes are upon the ways of man, and he seeth all his goings. There is no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves” (Job 34:20-22).

CHAPTER THREE

A SANCTUARY IN THE DESERT

“Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed: thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation” (Exodus 15:13).

Sinai’s Shaking Prefigures the Heavenly Sanctuary

Rameses was the land where Joseph placed his father and his brothers as they settled down in Egypt (Genesis 47:11). It was also from Rameses that the children of Israel departed on the day of the Exodus (Exodus 12:37). And in the 3rd month of 2666, after the Exodus, the Lord commanded and the Hebrews broke camp as they departed to set up camp in the wilderness of Sinai in front of the mountain (Exodus 19:1-2). On that mountain, God’s final judgment was heralded as His character was revealed when God wrote the Ten Commandments. Such an event had an element of the judgment taking place right now in the Heavenly Sanctuary.

We have read of the awesome experience Moses had at the reception of the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai, how he exceedingly feared and trembled (Hebrews 12:21). We are not coming to the earthly Mount Sinai to meet with our God. Yet when the apostle teaches that we are to meet with God, he speaks of the Heavenly Mount Zion, he says: “But ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels” (Hebrews 12:22). Therefore, we are summoned to appear before God, this time not on Mount Sinai but on Mount Zion, not at the earthly sanctuary but at the Heavenly Sanctuary and we are strictly commanded:

“See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven: Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven” (Hebrews 12:25-26).

Why does the Word of God promise another shaking? Consider for a moment the earthquake that happened at Mount Sinai with all its supernatural sights and sounds and how the people fled in panic. Then, the glory of God, which made this sin-stained world shake, appeared to their natural senses to be dreadful. But, you may ask, why is it that God is speaking of another shaking, not of the earth only but also Heaven, and yet God speaks of it as a promise? Would God’s people be glad about the shaking of Heaven and earth? “The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it; and it shall fall, and not rise again” (Isaiah 24:20). When God speaks of this shaking, he is speaking about a spiritual cleansing done by the Lord Jesus in the Most Holy Place in the Heavenly Sanctuary. Such a shaking refers to the remission or removal of sins from the repentant sinner. But soon the Sanctuary in Heaven will be shaken for the reason of cleansing it from the stain of sin. Let us continue the reading:

“And this word, yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain” (Hebrews 12:27).

At the present, we have a High Priest; the Lord Jesus, in the Most Holy Place in the Heavenly Sanctuary (Hebrews 8:1-2; Hebrews 9:24; Hebrews 10:19). Moreover, here on earth we beseech Him to remove our sins and our sinful traits that stain our character. Those sins are removed from us when we repent and ask for forgiveness as we ask our High Priest Jesus: “Remove from me the way of lying: and grant me thy law graciously” (Psalms 119:29). Accordingly, we approach the Heavenly Sanctuary with the claim: “Remove from me reproach and contempt; for I have kept thy testimonies” (Psalms 119:22).

Thus, as I confess my sins to God, they are removed from me and I become clean by the blood of the Lord Jesus (Hebrews 13:12). In this time of probation, let us plead with God with this acknowledgment: “Iniquities prevail against me: as for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away” (Psalms 65:3). Then we grasp God’s grace and plead for His deliverance from sins: “Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name: and deliver us, and purge away our sins, for thy name's sake” (Psalms 79:9).

But our forgiven sins are not automatically erased. Our Lord Jesus bears our iniquities as it is written, “So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many” (Hebrews 9:28). However, the glorious day is soon approaching when Heaven will be shaken and those sins which have been removed from the repentant sinners will also be removed from Heaven. So Heaven itself will be cleansed from the stain of sin.

The Word of God also teaches that in the shaking of Heaven there are some things which cannot be removed nor shaken (Hebrews 12:27). For instance, God’s will cannot be shaken and therefore not removed; remember our Lord Jesus when he prayed: “Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done” (Luke 22:42). Repentant and forgiven sinners will not have their names removed from the book in Heaven, yet that warning is given by the Lord: “I will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent” (Revelation 2:5). Therefore, as the Lord Jesus’ offer of salvation is still available and the door of mercy is still open, we can claim His promises and tell Him: “Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions” (Psalms 51:1). However, one thing we do not want to be blotted out at the coming shaking of the Heavenly Sanctuary is our names from the book of life. Let us take hold of the promise: “He that overcometh... I will not blot out his name out of the book of life...” (Revelation 3:5).

The Code of God’s Judgment

It was an awesome view for the people of Israel looking at Mount Sinai as it “was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire” (Exodus 19:18). What happened on Mount Sinai was repeated in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost as the Holy Spirit in both events descended in the form of fire. The promise was received by the church as the Lord Jesus had “...commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father...” (Acts 1:4). Such a promise was received “when the day of Pentecost was fully come...” (Acts 2:1). At that time “there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:3-4).

On Mount Sinai, the Lord had descended in fire when God gave Moses “two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God” (Exodus 31:18). How do we know that it was the Holy Spirit that wrote the Ten Commandments in two tablets of stone? Paul elucidates this point by stating that we are the epistle of Christ... “Written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart” (2 Corinthians 3:3).

The act of abolishing or changing the Ten Commandments written by the Holy Spirit is blasphemy against God. The Lord Jesus made it clear when He said: “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill” (Matt. 5:17). No wonder the Holy Scriptures speak about the Ten Commandments written on Mount Sinai as being permanent and immutable:

“For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, do not commit adultery, said also, do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law” (James 2:10-11).

It is the Law of God, the Ten Commandments of Exodus 20:1-17, by which God will judge the world. Therefore, the Word of God catches our attention with the words: “So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty” (James 2:12). This world has no justice; the princes of this world have introduced a different kind of law called human rights by which they foster and protect the practices of Sodom and Gomorrah. Isaiah prophesied of God’s holy people when he said: “Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah” (Isaiah 1:9). The world has a war against God’s remnant specifically because they obey God’s Law rather than human rights as established by humanism. But let the Word of God explain this war: “And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Revelation 12:17). Against the powers of darkness of this world we have to speak loudly and clearly, just like Peter and Paul presented a response: “Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye” (Acts 4:19).

The war began in Heaven by the renegade Lucifer. This cosmic war was against the Law of God. The war continues on earth, and likewise it is against the Law of the Creator. The war will be ended by God when He will finish the judgment by his holy Law (James 2:12). The book of Revelation presents another view of this judgment:

“And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war” Revelation 19:11.

This will be explained in detail in a later chapter. However, notice a foretaste of what is going on as judgment continues in the Heavenly Sanctuary as war is presently being waged against the Law of God here on earth. In both instances, Heaven is opened:

“And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail” (Revelation 11:19).

Idolatry in the Foothills of Mount Sinai in 2666 A.M.

Satan's hatred towards the Hebrews was intensified because of God's favor and protection for them. That old serpent was enraged and looking for an opportunity to destroy the people of God. Therefore, in 2666 he incited the children of Israel to prevaricate from the truth and celebrate an idolatrous worship. First, they made "a molten calf" (Exodus 32:4) and then they worshiped it (Exodus 32:8). Having made a false god, they silenced their conscience and convinced themselves that their liberation and protection was due to the idol of their own hands. They gave honor and glory to that thing, saying: "These be thy gods, Oh Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt" (Exodus 32:4). Their conscience was so lulled that in their anxiety they entrusted their souls for their salvation and forgiveness of sins to that golden calf. Having been duped and wrongfully believing that they could achieve atonement for sins from an invention of their own making, they pushed Aaron to "built an altar" in front of the calf (Exodus 32:25). Having completely seared their consciences, the people fell into the trap of idolatry as they tried to work their own salvation and they confessed their sins to an idol and "offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings (Exodus 32:6).

Moreover, "the people sat down to eat and to drink" (Exodus 32:6). But such eating and drinking was not the customary daily eating; they were eating and drinking food sacrificed to an Egyptian god; their feast was the flesh of the animals that represented Apis, an Egyptian god believed to be the reincarnation of Osiris, the sun god. The Hebrews had sacrificed unawares to the sun god in the hope of receiving forgiveness for their sins from The Almighty God, Whom they had represented by the abomination of the Egyptians in the form of a calf.

You may ponder at Moses' action and even question why, in his indignation for the gravity of Israel's sin, he "took the calf which they had made, and burnt it in the fire and ground it to powder, and strawed it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it" (Exodus 32: 20). There is a reason behind Moses' action. He gave them to drink the god of their making as an object lesson of harsh rebuke so that Israel should come to their senses and learn that there is no virtue in that abomination. The children of Israel prevaricated from the truth and did in accordance with the Egyptians' traditions. They ate and drank to the honor of their god, after offering sacrifices in accordance with the Osirian sacrament. This was the doctrine that the virtues and powers of the eaten can be thus absorbed by the eater. Although crude, this was a core concept, the conviction that one could receive immortality by eating the flesh and blood of a god who had died.

The Day of Atonement Prefigured the Judgment Day

On the Day of Atonement, the high priest alone went into the Most Holy Place in the earthly sanctuary "within the veil before the mercy seat, which is upon the ark..." (Leviticus 16:2). Aaron and every subsequent high priest should offer a bullock for his sins and for the sins of his house (Leviticus 16:6), and its blood he should sprinkle seven times with his finger upon the mercy seat, in the Most Holy Place (Leviticus 16:14). Moreover, on the Day of Atonement, the high priest should "take of the congregation of the children of Israel two kids of the goats for a sin offering..." (Leviticus 16:5). He was to "take the two goats, and present them before the Lord..." (Leviticus 16:7). The high priest should then cast lots on the two goats "one lot for the LORD, and the other lot for the scapegoat" (Leviticus 16:8). The goat for the Lord was sacrificed by the high priest himself, as a sin offering (Leviticus 16:9). This goat was

sacrificed for the sins of the people (Leviticus 16:10) and its blood was brought into the Most Holy Place in the sanctuary; that is “within the veil” and sprinkled upon the mercy seat and before the mercy seat (Leviticus 16:15). That was how the high priest made “an atonement for the Holy Place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel” (Leviticus 16:16). Symbolically, all the sins of the children of Israel were brought to remembrance on that day and were to be eradicated from the presence of the sanctuary. But a sacrifice was to be made in order to “make atonement in the Holy Place” (Leviticus 16:17). And “until he come out, and have made an atonement for himself, and for his household and for the congregation of Israel” (Leviticus 16:17), when he had reconciled the Holy Place, the tabernacle of congregation and the altar (Leviticus 16:20) only then could the high priest bring the live goat (Leviticus 16:20).

Notice that the atonement was made with the sacrificed goat and it was sacrificed for the sins of the people. Now, what about the scapegoat? This goat, the Lord had commanded: “shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited” (Leviticus 16:22). That goat was to be presented alive before the Lord, to make an atonement with him and to let him go for a scapegoat into the wilderness” (Leviticus 16:10).

“And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness” (Leviticus 16:21).

Of the two goats presented on the Day of Atonement, one paid the penalty of our sins; the sacrificed goat represented the Lord Jesus Who redeemed us from the penalty of death. The scapegoat represents the real culprit for the problem of sin, Satan (I John 3:8), who has been judged (John 12:31) and found guilty of the sins of the world.

Thus, coming out of Egypt, the people of Israel received a major token of God’s revelation of His plan of redemption. To Moses, it was revealed the essence of the Heavenly Sanctuary message through the atonement. To him, it was revealed the truth about judgment and the eradication of sin by God. But to Daniel, it was revealed the exact date when the Messiah, the Son of God, would make atonement for the sins of the world. To Daniel, it was also revealed when the Sanctuary in Heaven would be cleansed (Daniel 8:14). We will study this later.

The Heavenly Sanctuary Shown to Moses

Notice that it was on Mount Sinai that God showed Moses the city of the living God: Mount Zion. God purposed that His people make an earthly tabernacle according to the similitude of the Heavenly Tabernacle (Hebrews 8:5). After viewing the magnificence of the Heavenly Sanctuary, Moses received God’s command:

“And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. According to all that I show thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it” (Exodus 25:8-9).

The first covenant consisted in the making of the earthly sanctuary in accordance with the pattern in Heaven, which was designed to represent God's plan of salvation (Hebrews 9:1). Such a "covenant had ordinances of divine service", and also had an earthly sanctuary (Hebrews 9:1).

The earthly tabernacle was built with two compartments; "the first, wherein was the candlestick and the table and the showbread; which was called the sanctuary" (Hebrews 9:2). Into that first compartment is where the priests went continually, that is, daily (Hebrews 9:6). The second compartment "is called the Holiest of all" (Hebrews 9:3), which had the Ark of the Covenant (Hebrews 9:4) and the mercy seat (Hebrews 9:5). "But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the errors of his people" (Hebrews 9:7).

On the day of His ascension, our Lord Jesus went into the Holy Place; that is, the first compartment of the Heavenly Sanctuary as represented by the daily ministration of the earthly priests. "The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing" (Hebrews 9:8). Jesus offered His own blood once and for all, "by his own blood he entered in once into the Holy Place, having obtained eternal redemption for us" (Hebrews 9:12). You will see in the final chapter of this book that when 6000 years in the chronology of the world had elapsed the Lord Jesus began His ministry in the Most Holy Place in the Heavenly Sanctuary, as it is written: "...But now once in the end of the world hath he ministered to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." (Hebrews 9:26). We will also see that such a ministry is what was revealed to Daniel regarding the cleansing of the sanctuary, as it is written: "And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission" (Hebrews 9:22). Notice that on the cross the Lord Jesus paid for the penalty of sin, but at the time of the end He ministers in the Most Holy Place (Hebrews 9:24; Hebrews 10:19) to put an end to sin (Hebrews 9:28). Such putting away of sin was represented by the ceremonial Sabbath of the Day of Atonement, such event represented the time of judgment which was to take place in the Most Holy Place in the Heavenly Sanctuary when the investigative judgment should begin. The Day of Atonement was therefore a miniature form of the judgment in Heaven which precedes the second coming of the Majesty of Heaven, as it is written: "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Hebrews 9:28).

The Day when Moses Smote the Rock

As Israel camped in Rephidim, they found no water to drink (Exodus 17:1). There in Rephidim is where Moses smote the rock in Horeb and water came out of it as the Lord stood on the rock (Exodus 17:6). At that time the Lord had commanded Moses to smite the rock but it was the Lord who was standing on that rock; symbol of the true Rock. Let us read from the primary source:

"And the LORD said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go. Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel" (Exodus 17:5-6).

On the occasion when the people of Israel camped in Kadesh in the desert of Zin (Numbers 20:1) "And there was no water for the congregation: and they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron" (Numbers 20:2). Then the Lord gave explicit directions to Moses as to what to do. God wanted to

give them water once again, just like the water that God gives is “water springing up into everlasting life” (John 4:14). This time Moses was not meant to smite the rock at all, because he had done that once in another desert on another rock. This time the Lord told Moses:

“Take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou, and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth his water, and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock: so thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts drink” (Numbers 20:8).

Nonetheless, Moses did not give glory to God but said “Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?” (Numbers 20:10) and he smote the rock twice (Numbers 20:11). And because of his unbelief, Moses was punished by not having the privilege to enter Canaan with his people Israel (Numbers 20: 12).

Part of his unbelief was that Moses smote the rock twice, that rock was a symbol of Jesus Christ, as it is written: “they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ” (1 Corinthians 10:4). The Word of God presents the Lord Jesus not only as that Rock but as God, “For who is God, save the LORD? And who is a rock, save our God?” (2 Sam. 22:32; Psalms 18:31). Having smitten the rock twice, Moses did not honor God by illustrating differently, that the Rock of our salvation was going to be offered once not twice (Hebrews 7:27; Hebrews 9:28).

Moses did not spoil the plan of salvation but he failed for an instant to acknowledge that salvation is through grace and not by works. The Rock of our salvation was smitten of God and not of men as the prophet Isaiah wrote: “Yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted” (Isaiah 53:4).

Moses’ Last Message in 2706 A.M.

Five months prior to Moses’ last speech, Aaron died on mount Hor in the 40th year after the Israelites came out of Egypt, (Numbers 33:38), he was 123 years of age when he died (Numbers 33:39). Aaron died just after the incident of the fiery serpents that struck and bit the Israelites and many died (Numbers 21:6). There the Lord commanded Moses to make a serpent of brass and set it on a pole so that anybody who had been bitten of serpents should lift up their eyes and behold the serpent of brass and live (Numbers 21:9). Did the brass serpent have any special virtue? None at all, but it was for Israel to put their trust in the Lord. It was also to tell the world that salvation comes from God, as the world has been bitten by the venomous old serpent and suffers from the poisonous effects of sin. The Lord Jesus spoke about his death as He was to be lifted up on a cross. He said:

“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:14-15).

As the final day approached for their last stay in the wilderness, the children of Israel journeyed from the mountains of Abarim in front of Mount Nebo (Numbers 33:47) and camped by Jordan in the plains of Moab near Jericho (Numbers 33:48). Here God commanded Moses to encourage the people of Israel that when they shall cross the Jordan into Canaan they must displace the inhabitants of the land, destroy all their pictures and all their molten images, and pull down all their high places (Numbers 33:50-52).

On the occasion of his last speech when Moses addressed the nation on the east side of Jordan (Deuteronomy 1:1); on the very day when he was 120 years old, he declared to the Hebrew nation that he could not go over this Jordan (Deuteronomy 31:2). Moses revealed another important chronological fact. On the day of his last speech, he not only disclosed his age, 120 years, but also made known the date in which he addressed the Israelites: “And it came to pass in the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first day of the month, that Moses spake unto the children of Israel, according unto all that the LORD had given him in commandment unto them” (Deuteronomy 1:3). So, here was the great leader on the day of the anniversary of his birth, on the 1st day in the eleventh month in 2706 A.M.

Moses’ Burial in 2706 A.M.

As Moses concluded his last discourse to Israel (Deuteronomy 32:45), he spoke of commanding their children ‘to observe all the words of this law’ (Deuteronomy 32:46), so that when they should cross over the Jordan, they would prolong their lives (Deuteronomy 32:47). Then, in solemn obedience Moses directed his steps towards his final resting place; because as soon as he ended his speech, the Lord commanded Moses, on that very day (Deuteronomy 32:48) to walk up the mountain Abarim in Mount Nebo facing Jericho and to behold the promised land of Canaan (Deuteronomy 32:49). After that, he would die there on the mountain, just as Aaron his brother died on Mount Hor (Deuteronomy 32:50). Lastly, God reminded him the reason for his death; it was because he trespassed against the Lord among the children of Israel at the waters of Meribah-Kadesh (Deuteronomy 32:51).

On so many occasions, the Israelites premeditated Moses’ murder, but he incessantly pleaded with God in intercession for them. On his last day, he demonstrated once again his love for them. ‘Moses, the man of God,’ as he was called, ‘blessed the children of Israel before his death’ (Deuteronomy 33:1).

Moses’ burial was not attended by any human being, as God did not allow mortals to accompany this holy man of God in his death. The Lord Himself “buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, in front of Bethpeor: but no man knows of his sepulcher up to this day” (Deuteronomy 34:6). Oh but what an honor for a human being to be buried by the Creator! And his burial was certainly not altogether solitary, for where God moves, there goes the millions of angels with Him. Therefore, Moses understood that his own funeral would be attended by ten thousands of holy angels, so he told Israel in his last speech:

“And he said, The LORD came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints: from his right hand went a fiery law for them” (Deuteronomy 33:2).

Meanwhile, the children of Israel mourned and wept for Moses for a period of thirty days in the plains of Moab (Deuteronomy 34:8). That was exactly one month before the forty-year wilderness prophecy would be fulfilled. Moses died on the day of his birth date. Had Moses needed an epitaph for a tombstone, a perfect one for this man of God who worked tirelessly for the salvation of his people would have been: “The friend of God” (James 2:23; Isaiah 41:8)

CHAPTER FOUR

ISRAEL: GOVERNANCE OF THE JUDGES

“And the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the LORD that he did for Israel” Judges 2:7.

Chart of the Chronology of the Judges' Period

PATRIARCH	AGE	EVENT	TEXT	WORLD YEAR (A.M.)
JACOB	130 years	TO EGYPT	Genesis 47:9	2236
Israel's Slavery	430 years	THE EXODUS	Exodus 12:40-41	2666
ISRAEL	40 years	Wilderness	Acts 13:18	2706
JUDGES	450 years	Joshua to Samuel	Acts 13:20	3156
Samuel and Saul		Both died in the same year		3156

Joshua: Israel's First Judge

Joshua was God's chosen leader in Israel who began the period of the judges in the year 2706. The Lord addressed His new servant with the words: "My servant Moses is dead, now arise and cross over the River Jordan with this people" (Joshua 1:2). God in His wisdom had chosen Moses' successor for the guidance of His people. Even from the time of the wilderness, the election had been made. Of Joshua, it was prophesied that he should not see death until he and his fellow compatriot Caleb would settle down in the Promised Land. Joshua had learned loyalty to duty and obedience to commands. He was Moses' minister who alone with Moses ascended to the mount of God on the occasion when they spent forty days in Sinai for the reception of the Commandments of God (Exodus 24:13). On the day of Joshua's succession his title was given: Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister (Joshua 1:1).

When the children of Israel were expecting judgment from God due to their sin at Sinai with the incident of the molten calf, Moses and Joshua are seen in the Tabernacle interceding for the people. Moses speaks

face to face with the Lord and returned to the camp (Exodus 33:11), while Joshua remained in the tabernacle (Exodus 33:11). This passage tells a lot about the training for leadership that Joshua received from Moses. Such data is important because Moses had previously been asking God about Israel's future leadership. Moses had been anxious to know if he would lead Israel into Canaan or not. He said to the Lord: "thou hast not let me know whom thou wilt send with me" (Exodus 33:12). And when on Sinai Moses requested to see God's glory, the truth was revealed to Moses. The Lord replied: "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest" (Exodus 33:14).

Moses died at the end of the year 2706 one month prior to the end of Israel's 40 year wilderness journey. The Hebrew nation had been mourning the death of their beloved leader in the plains of Moab (Deuteronomy 34:8). As the new year 2707 dawned, the people of Israel camped on the east side of Jordan (Numbers 22:1) expecting to march onwards to Canaan under God's leadership Joshua, who was endowed with the spirit of wisdom, as Moses had laid his hands on him (Deuteronomy 34:9).

The Gilgal Passover in 2707 A.M.

God commanded Joshua to circumcise the children of Israel (Joshua 5:2) when they crossed the Jordan on the 10th of the 1st month (Joshua 4:19) of 2707. The reason for this circumcision was that all the circumcised men of war who came out of Egypt had died in the wilderness (Joshua 5:4). This circumcision was for all the children that were born in the desert who had not been circumcised yet (Joshua 5:5). The name of the place was called Gilgal because the Lord said: "This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you" (Joshua 5:9).

Now the children of Israel were sanctified. They also celebrated their first Passover in Canaan on the 14th day of the first month at evening in the plains of Jericho (Josh 4:19; 5:10). On the next day, they ate of the old corn of the land unleavened cakes (Joshua 5:11). And the manna, the bread from heaven, ceased the day after they had eaten of the old corn of the land (Joshua 5: 12).

Joshua's Last Speech in Shechem

It was in Shechem where Joshua delivered his final speech. Joshua had lived a life of service and loyalty to God's commandments. Like Moses, Joshua obeyed direct orders from God, and so he commanded the children of Israel. Therefore, in his final address to Israel, he repeated their history of how God established Israel as a nation and rescued her from idolatry even from ancient times when Terah prevaricated from the truth and "served other gods" (Joshua 24:2), and how God called Abraham and established him in Canaan (Joshua 24:3). Joshua died at the age of 110 years (Joshua 24:29). He was a warrior against idolatry and a true defender of the sanctuary message. Before his death, he encouraged Israel to worship the true God:

"And if it seems evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (Joshua 24:15).

Samuel: Israel's Last Judge

God's final judge for the people of Israel was Samuel. Unlike other judges, "Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life" (1 Sam. 7:15). He was consecrated to the Lord long before his conception by Hannah his mother (1 Sam. 1:5). Hanna fulfilled her vow when God granted her petition. She had promised that if God would give her "a man child, then I will give him unto the LORD all the days of his life" (1 Sam. 1:11). Hanna had pledged Samuel to be a servant of God forever, she said: "I will bring him, that he may appear before the LORD, and there abide for ever" (1 Sam. 1:22). Therefore the little child, girded with a linen ephod (1 Sam. 2:18), ministered to the Lord before Eli the priest (1 Sam. 2:11).

Little Samuel grew up serving as a priest, yet in his early childhood years, the Lord called him to be a prophet as well. One day when Eli the priest and little Samuel had gone to sleep, the boy Samuel heard the voice of God calling him four times (1 Sam. 3:4, 6, 8, and 10). On that night, Samuel received his first vision. God revealed to him the judgment against Eli's house (1 Sam. 3:14). With this vision, Samuel began his prophetic ministry. "And all Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the LORD" (1 Sam. 3:20).

But Samuel was not only a prophet and priest; he was Israel's last judge. Samuel did his yearly rounds judging Israel from place to place in Bethel, Gilgal and Mizpeh (1 Sam. 7:16). Then he would return to his own house in Ramah where he also judged Israel (1 Sam. 7:17).

One day a prophet of God visited Eli and revealed to him God's judgment to fall on his house because of the wickedness of his children the priests (1 Sam. 2:27). In his admonition, this anonymous prophet also revealed to Eli that God would establish a faithful priest in Israel. Speaking about Samuel, he declared, thus saith the Lord:

"And I will raise me up a faithful priest that shall do according to that which is in mine heart and in my mind: and I will build him a sure house; and he shall walk before mine anointed for ever" (1 Sam. 2:35). Amazingly, this prophet revealed that Samuel would live and minister during the whole reign of King Saul – (God's anointed).

Israel Requests to Have a King in 3116 A.M.

It was in the year 3116 when the elders of Israel requested Samuel to establish a monarchy by giving them a king. Moreover, they belittled Samuel's capability of judging and said to him: "behold thou art old" (1 Sam. 8:5). Despite Samuel's advanced age, he judged Israel all the days of his life. King Saul trembled at his command and sought his advice all the days of Samuel's life.

Israel's request to have a king was a desire to conform to the world's standards for governance. It was an emotional and blatant request by the children of Israel; they did not want to remain different to the rest of the world's nations; they wanted to unite with the world. Consequently, they drifted away from God and headed towards a system of worldliness that led them to despise the government of God. They embraced the customs of other nations and idolatrous practices made their inroads into Israel's religious and civil systems. Capriciously they went ahead with their demand, not reckoning the dire effects that such a move would bring on their children's faith. They were resolved to be united with the world, following the world's traditions (1 Sam. 8:19).

When the children of Israel asked for a king, they not only ascribed to Samuel the tag of ‘old man’ but they revealed their real thought; they said, “make us a king to judge us like all the nations” (1 Sam. 8:5). They wanted to have young men and even children ruling them, just like the other nations who had juvenile monarchs enthroned at the time of their father’s death. Samuel warned them that under a king their children would be recruited and drafted into the army as “instruments of war” (1 Sam.8:12), he would take their fields and vineyards (1 Sam. 8:14) and would tax them severely (1 Sam. 8:15). Yet the children of Israel refused counsel, they responded: “nay but we will have a king over us; that we also may be like all the nations; and our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles” (1 Sam. 8:19-20). On that day, the children of Israel rejected not just Samuel, but God (1 Sam. 8:7).

How is it that Samuel, ‘an old man,’ had so much power in Israel? Saul had little power in comparison to Samuel. When Nahash the Ammonite came against the men of Jabesh (1 Sam. 11:1), the men complained to the king of Israel, but notice Saul’s response: “he took a yoke of oxen, and hewed them in pieces, and sent them throughout all the coasts of Israel by the hands of messengers, saying, Whosoever cometh not forth after Saul and after Samuel, so shall it be done unto his oxen...” (1 Sam. 11:7). The Word of God says that “the fear of the LORD fell on the people, and they came out with one consent” (1 Sam. 11:7). Then Samuel summoned Israel to Gilgal to consolidate the kingdom of Saul there (1 Sam. 11:14).

Thunderstorm: a Sign of God’s Displeasure

In Gilgal, Samuel reiterated Israel’s wickedness and rebuked them harshly for requesting a king (1 Sam. 12:17). Moreover, he called on the Lord, Who sent a lightning storm, “and all the people greatly feared the Lord and Samuel” (1 Sam. 12:18). So the people feared that ‘old man’ whose power was from the Lord “And all the people said unto Samuel, Pray for thy servants unto the LORD thy God, that we die not: for we have added unto all our sins this evil, to ask us a king” (1 Sam. 12:19). But Samuel who was their judge, prophet and priest proved his intercessory ministry when he told them: “Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way” (1 Sam. 12:23).

Saul had only reigned one year (1 Sam.13:1), and in his second year he made the mistake of usurping his son Jonathan’s due honor when Jonathan defeated a garrison of the Philistines (1 Sam. 13:3). Saul made it public in Israel that it had been him who defeated the enemy (1 Sam. 13:3-4). However, the greatest sin that Saul committed was that of sacrificing a burnt offering to the Lord in order to lift His spirit when the Philistines assailed them and Samuel was not there to offer the sacrifice.

The people were scattered, and Samuel was not there to direct them. The last judge of Israel “tarried seven days, according to the set time that Samuel had appointed” (1 Sam. 13:8), yet the people were impatient and started deserting Saul (1 Sam. 13:8). Then Saul thought to lift the spirits of his people by usurping the prerogatives of a priest. He had seen Samuel ministering as a judge and also as a priest, and he believed he could do the same. Saul committed the grave error of offering burnt offerings and peace offerings (1 Sam. 13:9), something that was strictly forbidden for anybody except for the priests.

Having learned about Saul’s terrible mistake, the judge Samuel used the same wording of the Lord when he brought judgment on Adam and Eve; he asked Saul, “What hast thou done?” (1 Sam.13:11). By interrogating Saul in this way, he directed the king to confess his sin and not to argue by excusing himself.

Then Saul showed his flaws and started complaining and answering the wrong question. Samuel did not ask him for excuses, but Saul responded: "...Because I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that thou camest not within the days appointed..." (1 Sam. 13:11). Then he says: "I forced myself and offered a burnt offering" (1 Sam. 13:12).

Samuel did not judge the king's person but his character. He attacked his behavior by telling him, "Thou hast done foolishly." He further told him "thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God" (1 Sam. 13:13). Once again Samuel showed true leadership and true judgment, even when he was judging a leader of Israel by pronouncing the Lord's judgment: "for now would the Lord have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever but now thy kingdom shall not continue; the Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart" (1 Sam. 13:13-14).

David: A King After God's Own Heart

It was from the beginning of Saul's reign that the Lord had chosen David to be king. On the day when Saul disobeyed God's Word, the Lord said: "It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king" (1 Sam. 15:11). Saul failed to fulfill one of God's prophecies and direct commands about the obliteration of Amalek. So grievous was the violation that Samuel did not sleep all night for the anguish in his heart (1 Sam. 15:11).

Once again, Judge Samuel rebuked King Saul and revealed to him that because he had rejected the Word of the Lord, God had also rejected him from being king (1 Sam. 15:23). The wretched king asked Samuel to excuse his fault, that the people made him feel afraid (1 Sam. 15:24). On that day, Samuel revealed to Saul that his monarchy had come to an end. He said: "The LORD hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine, that is better than thou" (1 Sam. 15:28).

Even more amazing is that an old judge had more power, energy and zeal for God than the king. Samuel commanded the soldiers to bring King Agag, who came very politely thinking that the threat of death was over (1 Sam. 15:32). Then Samuel with all his authority passed and executed judgment on Agag as he said to him: "as thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women. And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord in Gilgal" (1 Sam. 15:33). Even after that, Saul pleaded with Samuel to return with him to worship the Lord together (1 Sam. 15:25), Samuel did not accede to his entreaty and went to his house in Ramah (1 Sam. 15:34). Of Samuel, it is written that he "came no more to see Saul until the day of his death" (1 Sam. 15:35).

Samuel mourned for Saul's kingship as one mourns a deceased person. Yet the Lord reproved him for doing so, given that the Lord had rejected Saul from reigning over Israel (1 Sam. 16:1). Moreover, God commanded him to fill his horn with oil and go to Bethlehem and anoint the man that God had chosen to be Israel's next king (1 Sam. 16:1,4). Therefore, Samuel anointed David "and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward" (1 Sam. 16:13). But in the meantime, the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul (1 Sam. 16:14). From that day on, Israel had a new king, but that knowledge had been hidden from Israel.

From the day, when the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, an evil spirit troubled him (1 Sam. 16:14). Saul sunk further into wickedness, harbouring increasing envy against David to the point that one day

when the people acclaimed David hero over tens of thousands, he said of David: “what can he have more but the kingdom?” (1 Sam. 18:8). David’s life was in danger. Saul tried to spear him to the wall with a javelin (1 Sam. 19:10); he also wanted to kill David in his bed (1 Sam. 19:15). So David escaped and went to live with the Judge Samuel (1 Sam. 19:18). Yet again, Saul kept David on the run so that he fled as a fugitive from place to place even to the heathen land of Gath (1 Sam. 21:10). The merciless king Saul killed eighty five priests of the Lord just because one of them received David in his house (1 Sam. 22:18).

Samuel Ends Period of the Judges in 3156 A.M.

Although Saul was reigning together with Samuel, Saul’s reign does not count when gathering all the data for the biblical chronology. In the year 3156 the period of the Judges of Israel came to a close with the death of the prophet Samuel. About Israel’s last judge it is said: “And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life” (1 Sam. 7:15).

Therefore, the period of the judges, which began with Joshua and spanned 450 years was over when Samuel died. The Word of God states: “And after that he gave unto them judges about the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet” (Acts 13:20).

Samuel died around the time King Saul committed suicide after consulting the witch of Endor. Then all Israel came to mourn and bury the last judge of Israel in his city Ramah (1 Sam. 28:3).

When Samuel died “Saul put away those that had familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land” (1 Sam. 28:3). But as soon as the Philistines arrayed themselves for battle against Israel, Saul “was afraid, and his heart greatly trembled” (1 Sam. 28:5). Remember that the Lord had departed from Saul. The king banned all the witches from his country because of personal convenience. Saul did not repent from his wickedness; he only sought the protection of the Lord. But “when Saul inquired of the Lord, the Lord answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets” (1 Sam. 28:6). So when Samuel died, Saul attempted to make ‘the spirit’ of Samuel return from the dead at all costs. He even consulted a woman who had a familiar spirit (1 Sam. 28:7). Saul was deceived with the idea that it is the spirit of a dead person who communicates with the living. But notice what happened to Saul for doing that consultation:

“So Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the LORD, even against the word of the LORD, which he kept not, and also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to inquire of it” (1 Chronicles 10:13).

CHAPTER FIVE

THE ANCIENT WORLD FROM 1400 to 586 B.C.

Introduction

The historical period discussed in this chapter began about 1400 B.C., when Israel invaded western Palestine under the leadership of Joshua, and closed with the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. The beginning of this period coincides with the beginning of the decline of Egyptian power in Asia. The strongest power in the north was that of the Hittite kingdom. This, however, disappeared under the onslaught of the Sea Peoples two centuries later. Afterward the Assyrians came to the forefront and by brute force formed an empire that eventually reached from the highlands of Iran to the southern border of the Egypt. Babylonia, which during all this time existed only as a shadow of its former illustrious self, finally threw off the shackles of the Assyrian yoke and took its place once more as a short-lived but glorious empire.

An understanding of the history of these and other nations is essential to a correct understanding of the ancient history of the people of God, who struggled for their existence among various local nations in Palestine first under tribal leaders, the judges, then under kings, who were able to build a respectable kingdom and hold it together for a little more than a century. This, however, broke up into two rival kingdoms, each of which was too weak to withstand the forces pressing for control over Palestine, the vital land bridge between the two most important regions and civilizations of antiquity, Egypt and Mesopotamia. The northern kingdom of Israel was finally swallowed up by the Assyrians and completely disappeared from history after the destruction of Samaria in 722 B.C. The southern kingdom of Judah held out for almost another century and a half, but finally succumbed to the Babylonians. However, the religious vigor of the Jews preserved their national unity even in exile, with the result that Judah emerged from captivity a strong and united people.

The purpose of this chapter is to study the historical background of this most important and interesting period; to view the rise, decline, and fall of kingdoms and empires; and to observe how the people of God were influenced by the events, cultures, and civilizations of their time. Also, a brief survey of the history of the people of Israel is presented, first, divided into tribal organizations under the leadership of judges, later as a united body under three successive kings, and finally as two separate and rival kingdoms.

Since the Bible writers who have provided the bulk of available source material for a reconstruction of the history of Israel were its religious leaders and reformers, they viewed the history of Israel in the light of the people's obedience or disobedience to God, and recorded it as such. This is the reason that for some periods, when the people went through special crises or possessed outstanding leaders, our sources are plentiful, whereas for others they are pitifully meager, and leave great gaps that our present knowledge is as yet unable to bridge. The reader must therefore be aware that a historical sketch of the people of God in the times of the Old Testament is sketchy in some parts and well rounded in others.

The same is also true in regard to the history of the other ancient nations, all periods of which are not equally well covered by reliable source material. In some cases, the events of centuries are not yet known. The discovery of more original source material must be awaited before a reconstruction of ancient history in all its aspects becomes possible. The following survey represents the present state of knowledge, based (1) for the greater part on documentary evidence that has become available since the ancient languages written in various hieroglyphic or cuneiform scripts were resurrected, in the early 19th century, and (2) on the wealth of material preserved by the sand and debris of centuries and in recent decades brought to light by the scribe of the excavator.

Egypt From the Amarna Age to the End of the Twentieth Dynasty (1400 B.C.–1085 B.C.)

Chronology of the Period - Although an unassailable chronology of Egypt prior to about 660 B.C. has not yet been established, with the exception of that pertaining to the Twelfth Dynasty, our dates for the empire period—dynasties Eighteen to Twenty—are approximately correct. Slight variations in the dates given by various historians and chronologers are found, but are never greater than a few years. In fact, the chronology of this period has hardly been changed since it was established during the last century—in contrast with the chronology of all previous periods, which has been decreased by centuries for some periods and by millenniums for others.

It is not possible to enter into the intricate problems of ancient chronology here, and it may suffice to state that the dates of the empire period of Egypt are based on astronomical texts dated to the reigns of certain kings, on historical, dated records extant from that time, and on lists of kings from various sources. The dates presented in this section are thus based on all available source material, and cannot be off by more than a few years from the true dates. The margin of error is certainly not greater than 25 years, and is probably smaller than 10 years. The given dates can therefore be considered as relatively correct and are presented as such.

Egypt in the Amarna Age (Eighteenth Dynasty) - Moses witnessed the rise of Egypt to become the strongest political power of his time. During his life, the empire established by Thutmose III reached from the border of the Abyssinian highlands in the south to the river Euphrates in the north. The wealth of the Asia and Africa poured into the Nile country, where temples like those of Karnak, Luxor, Deir el-Bahri, and others were erected, so colossal that they have withstood the destructive power of both man and nature for millenniums, and have been the marvel of many generations of visitors.

When Israel was in the desert, from about 1445 to 1045 B.C., the Egyptian Empire was held together by the strong and ruthless hands of Amenhotep II (C. 1450-1425 B.C.) and of his son Thutmose IV (C. 1425-1412 B.C.). With the next king, Amenhotep III (C. 375 B.C.), a man came to the throne who enjoyed the full fruits of the empire his fathers had built, without expending much effort himself to hold it together. He had been a great hunter in early life and had led one military campaign to Nubia, but lived thereafter in magnificent luxury and leisure and spent his last days as a fat weakling with decayed teeth, as the abscesses in his mummy show. He married Tiye, who, as the daughter of commoners, was nevertheless a remarkable woman of whom Amenhotep was proud. Nevertheless, there was also a great influx of foreign blood into the royal family, for there were brought into the king's harem princesses from several foreign

kingdoms, the most important being Gilukhepa, of the Mitanni. That northern Mesopotamian kingdom, ruled by Indo-European Hurrians, had formerly been the greatest rival to the power of the earlier kings of the Eighteenth Dynasty, but was now cultivating friendly relations with Egypt.

Amenhotep III apparently considered the wealth of Asia and Africa, regularly coming to him by way of tribute, as something that had always enriched Egypt, and would continue to do so without any further effort on his part. He did not notice the distant rumblings of the breakup of his Asiatic empire. The Hittites in the north, unruly local princes in Syria and Palestine, and the intruding Habiru in those same countries nibbled away at the edges of the empire, and must have occasioned a noticeable decrease in the revenue of Egypt. However, the lazy Pharaoh did nothing to stem the tide of imperial decay.

Ikhnaton - Near the close of his reign, Amenhotep III made his son Amenhotep IV (Ikhnaton) coregent. His sole reign lasted from about 1375 to 1366 B.C. He is one of the most controversial personalities of history. While one scholar characterized him as the “first individual in history,” “a very exceptional man” (Breasted), another described him as “half insane” (Budge). Two recent authors speak of him as “the most fascinating personality who ever sat on the throne of the Pharaohs” (Steindorff and Seele), and another describes him as effeminate, abnormal, and dominated by women (Pendlebury).

Amenhotep IV, or Ikhnaton, as the king called himself after his religious revolution, broke with the traditional Amen religion of Egypt, and elevated Aten, the sun disk, to be the supreme and only god of the realm. Himself a physical weakling, he was possessed of a strong will power, and made a vigorous attempt to stamp out the religion and cult of Amen. Since Thebes was too strongly connected with Amen, Amenhotep moved the capital to another site several hundred miles down the river, where he built a city called Akhetaton, and vowed never to leave that place. Here he was surrounded by his followers, courtiers, poets, architects, and artists. With his encouragement, these men developed the new, realistic form of art that had only recently been introduced in Egypt. Artists painted and modeled their objects, not according to the traditional idealistic style, as had been the custom, but as they appeared to the eye—beautiful or ugly. Up to this time, for example, every king, whether old or young, handsome or ugly, had been depicted as a youthful and vigorous man—the ideal god-ruler. This was all changed now. The king was sculptured and painted in all his ugliness with a protruding abdomen, an elongated skull, and a long chin. His aging father was depicted as having a fat, sack-like figure.

Emphasis was also placed on ma‘at, which has been translated “truth,” but which means also “order,” “justice,” and “right.” Accordingly, things were to be seen as they are, not as they ought to be—really rather than ideally. In this principle, the young king was far ahead of his time and could not be understood, and for this reason, his revolution failed. However, his artists produced some of the masterpieces of all time, as, for example, the bust of Nefertiti, now in the Berlin Museum, and mural paintings of birds and plant life that have not been surpassed in beauty by painters of other periods, ancient or modern.

The king’s new religion has been called monotheism—a belief in one universal god. It is, however, highly questionable whether this term can rightly be applied to the brand of religion Ikhnaton introduced. It is true that he never worshiped any other god than Aton after the revolution, but his subjects did not worship Aton. They continued to worship the king as their god, as they had before, and he not only tolerated but apparently required this continued worship of his person.

Either the king or some poet of his time composed a hymn to Aton, praising the sun disk as the creator-god. Since this hymn is in certain respects parallel in wording and composition to the 104th psalm, some scholars have thought the latter to be a Hebrew edition of the Aton hymn. There is, however, no valid evidence to support this assumption, since any poet, glorifying a certain god as the supreme god of creation, who produces and preserves life and well-being, will use terms and expressions that are somewhat similar to those found in the Aton hymn or the 104th psalm.

The king was married to beautiful Nefertiti, whose world-famous bust, found in a sculptor's studio at Amarna, is one of the masterpieces of ancient art. The royal couple had six daughters, but no sons. However, the family life seems to have been very happy and natural, as contemporary pictures reveal. Never before did an Egyptian king have himself and his family depicted as did this monarch, kissing one of his daughters, or caressing his wife.

While Ikhnaton built palaces and sun temples in his new capital, and sponsored a naturalistic art far advanced for his time, his henchmen went through the country trying to eradicate the old religion by chiseling from all monuments the names of all other gods but Aton. The temples were closed, and the priests lost their customary allowances. That this policy created a deep-seated enmity in conservative circles can easily be understood. This feeling of hatred against Ikhnaton was increased by the gradual decrease in foreign revenue, which resulted in greater tax burdens for the Egyptian citizens, and simultaneously impoverished the population. This situation resulted from the gradual breakup of the empire. The first signs of the weakening power of Egypt in Asia had been evident under Amenhotep III, but they became more manifest under the weak rule of Ikhnaton, who lived his new religion, chanted hymns to Aton, refused to leave his new capital, and apparently did not care that the foreign possessions built up by means of the numerous military expeditions of his illustrious ancestors were being lost, one after another.

The Amarna Letters - The rich archive of cuneiform tablets found in the ruins of Ikhnaton's short-lived and ill-fated capital, Akhetaton, now called Tell el-'Amarna, contains much information concerning the contemporary political situation in Palestine and Syria. These hundreds of clay tablets, found in 1887, come from the official files of correspondence between the Palestinian and Syrian vassal princes and Pharaoh, as well as from the friendly kings of Mitanni, Assyria, and Babylonia. Few discoveries have shed more light on a limited period of the ancient world than have the Amarna Letters on the time of the kings Amenhotep III and Amenhotep IV (Ikhnaton).

These letters reveal clearly the waning influence of Egypt in Asia, as the powerful Hittites pressed against the Egyptian Empire and occupied a number of regions in northern Syria. Local Asiatic dynasties quarreled one with another, the more powerful overthrowing the weaker and thereby enlarging their own power and territory. The most notorious among these princes, who pretended to be vassals of Egypt but fought against Egyptian interests wherever they could, were Abd-Ashirta and later his son Aziru of Amurru. They extended their domain over a number of neighboring wealthy areas, such as Byblos, Beirut, and other Phoenician coastal cities.

In Palestine, the situation was similar. A number of local rulers took advantage of Egypt's weakness to extend their own possessions. There were also the Habiru, who invaded the country during this time from the direction of Transjordan. One city after another fell into their hands, and those among the princes who tried to remain faithful to Egypt, like the king of Jerusalem, wrote one frantic letter after another to

Pharaoh begging for military help against the invading Habiru. However, all the efforts of loyal princes and commissioners to stem the tide of rebellion and invasion were in vain. Official Egypt turned a deaf ear to all pleas and seemed to be indifferent to what happened in Syria or Palestine. This situation is vividly depicted in the Amarna Letters, which will be referred to again in the section dealing with the invasion of Canaan by the Hebrews. It is generally believed that the Habiru of the Amarna Letters were related to the Hebrews (see Genesis 10:21; 14:13).

Toward the end of his reign, Ikhnaton made Smenkhkare, his son-in-law, coregent. Ancient records give him four regnal years, but they probably fall entirely within the reign of his father-in-law. After Ikhnaton's death, another son-in-law came to the throne, the young Tutankhaton, meaning "the living form of Aton" (1366-1357 B.C.). He was not strong enough to withstand the pressure of the conservatives, and was forced to return to Thebes to restore the Amen cult and religion. He changed his name to Tutankhamen, abandoned the capital Akhetaton (Amarna), and tried to make amends for the "heresy" of his predecessors by repairing various temples, reinstating the Amen priests, and restoring the Amen cult to its former glory. When he died, after a reign of less than ten years, he received a magnificent burial in the Valley of the Kings in western Thebes, where all the pre-Amarna kings of the Eighteenth Dynasty had been buried. Since his is the only royal tomb to remain unmolested until its discovery in 1922, with its marvelous treasures, the name of Tutankhamen has become a modern household word. He is better known than any other Egyptian king, although he was only one of the insignificant and ephemeral rulers of Egypt's long history.

Tutankhamen left no children, and his widow turned to the Hittite king Shubbiluliuma, asking him in a letter for one of his sons to marry her and become king of Egypt. The Hittite king was at first baffled at this unusual request, and made an investigation as to the sincerity of the queen. Satisfied at last with regard thereto, he sent one of the Hittite princes to Egypt, who, however, was waylaid and murdered en route. This was probably arranged by Eye, one of the most influential courtiers of the previous Pharaohs. He forced Tutankhamen's widow to marry him and accordingly ruled Egypt for a few years (1357-1353 B.C.). He usurped not only the throne but also the mortuary temple and statutes of his predecessor.

When Eye in turn died, after a reign of about four years, the reins of government were taken over by the former army commander, Harmhab, who ruled for 34 years (1353-1320 B.C.). He is usually counted as the first king of the Nineteenth Dynasty. Harmhab seems to have been less tinged with the Amarna revolution than his two predecessors, and was therefore more acceptable to the priesthood and to the conservatives of the country. He began to count his regnal years from the death of Amenhotep III, as if he had been the legitimate ruler over Egypt during the time of Ikhnaton, Smenkhkare, Tutankhamen, and Eye. These four rulers were henceforth regarded as having been usurpers, "heretics," and are therefore not mentioned in later king lists. Thus, Amenhotep III was officially followed immediately by Harmhab.

The first task Harmhab set for himself was that of restoring internal order and security in Egypt, which seems to have been badly disrupted during the previous decades of weak rule. His edict, still extant, was issued "to establish order and truth, and expel deceit and lying." Priests were given special privileges in the judicial system, and severe and cruel punishments were threatened for abuses of power by officers of the realm. Since all his energy seems to have been needed for a restoration of order in the country, he had neither time nor power to regain the Asiatic possessions which by this time had completely been lost. Since the death of Thutmose IV in 1412 B.C., no Egyptian king had been seen in Syria or Palestine, with

the result that the Pharaoh was no longer known or feared there. This situation was advantageous to the Hebrews, who probably began their invasion of Palestine in 1405, and were able in succeeding decades to establish themselves there without interference on the part of the kings of Egypt.

The Nineteenth Dynasty - Dying childless, Harmhab was followed by his appointed successor, the general of the army, Ramses I. An old man, Ramses I died after a short reign (1320-1319 B.C.), and left the throne to his son, Seti I (1319-1299 B.C.). With him, a new era began, and once more the power of Egypt was felt. He made determined and partly successful attempts to regain the Asiatic possessions. Records carved on Egyptian temple walls and on a great stone monument found in the excavation of Beth-shan, at the eastern end of the Valley of Esdraelon, in Palestine, disclose that the king invaded Palestine during his first year. His chief aim was to regain some of the important cities which, in times past, had been occupied by Egyptian garrisons, and to control once more the trade routes to the fertile and rich Hauran in northern Transjordan. With three divisions, he claims to have attacked and conquered the cities of Yano'am, Beth-shan, and Hamath (south of Beth-shan) simultaneously. His victory stele found in Beth-shan shows that he reoccupied the city and stationed an Egyptian garrison there. He then crossed the Jordan and occupied certain rich areas in the Hauran, according to another victory monument found at Tell esh-Shihāb, about 22 miles east of the Sea of Galilee.

After Seti I had reoccupied certain important cities in western Palestine and Transjordan, he turned to Syria and reconquered Kadesh on the Orontes, according to his official records carved on the temple walls at Karnak and from the fragment of a victory stele found at Kadesh itself. On a later campaign Seti I advanced even farther north, to punish the renegade kingdom of Amurru and to force the Hittites to recognize certain rights of Egypt over northern Syria. Once more, loot from Syria and cedarwood from the Lebanon came to Egypt, although not in the quantities of a century earlier. However, Egypt once more enjoyed the satisfaction of being the proud ruler of foreign regions and peoples in Asia, although the new empire was but a shadow of the former one.

During the reign of Seti I, a freer interchange of culture began to take place between Egypt and Asia than even before. Canaanite deities, such as Baal, Resheph, Anath, Astarte, and others, were accepted into the Egyptian cult system. The Egyptian religion lost its isolation and some of its national peculiarities. From now on, more emphasis was placed on magic, ritual, and oracles, with the gods Fortune and Fate taking a more important role in the religious life of the Egyptians.

Ramses II and the Hittites - The policy of reconquering the Asiatic empire was continued by the next king, Ramses II (1299-1232 B.C.), whose reign was exceptionally long. The fact that he usurped many Egyptian monuments by exchanging his name for those of his royal predecessors, making it appear that these monuments had been erected by him, together with great building activity of his own, made Ramses II more famous than he deserved. The name of no other Pharaoh is found so often on ancient monuments as that of Ramses II. As a result, earlier Egyptologists attributed fame to him out of all proportion to his accomplishments.

When Ramses II came to the throne, the Hittite king Mutallu advised a Syrian prince to hasten to Egypt and pay homage to the new king, perhaps as a precaution, since no one could know what the young Pharaoh might do. As time passed and there were no marked signs of determination on the part of Ramses to hold on to his Asiatic possessions, the Hittite king organized a confederacy of Anatolian and Syrian states, which not only proclaimed its own complete independence, but also annexed other Egyptian

possessions in Syria. Its combined army of some 30,000 men was determined to keep northern Syria out of the Egyptian Empire.

Ramses logically felt that he must meet the challenge of the hour. With four divisions, bearing the names of the gods Amen, Ra, Ptah, and Set, probably equal in strength to the forces of the Hittite confederacy, he marched north. The Hittite army awaited the Egyptians at Kadesh on the Orontes, where the famous battle between Ramses and Mutallu took place. This struggle was described in word and picture on numerous monuments throughout Egypt.

The Hittites sprang a trap on Ramses. The latter had picked up a pretended Hittite deserter who reported that Mutallu had retreated and left Kadesh for better defensive positions in the north, while actually he was poised behind the city of Kadesh ready to attack. Suspecting no malice, Ramses therefore marched northward. Crossing the brook El-Mukadiyeh with the division of Amen, he pitched camp on the northern bank. When the next division, that of Ra, forded the same brook, Mutallu, with part of his army, slipped over the Orontes behind the Ra division and began to attack the surprised Egyptians simultaneously from both the south and the north. Ramses' two other divisions were still on the march seven or more miles to the south while the men of the Amen and Ra divisions were fighting for their lives.

The story of how Ramses saved his army by personal heroism is legendary and needs no repetition here. His claim to have turned the imminent defeat into a brilliant victory, proclaimed on many monuments, must also be taken with a grain of salt, because the Hittites claimed likewise to have won a complete victory over the Egyptians. It is probably true that Ramses was able to save the greater part of his army and so avoid a disaster, but he can hardly have been victorious, since the contested region of Syria was retained by the Hittites and permanently lost to Egypt. Hittite texts indicate, furthermore, that the Hittites penetrated the Lebanon and extended their power over Damascus, in southern Syria, which they would hardly have been able to do if they had been defeated as Ramses claims.

During the reigns of the two following Hittite rulers, Urkhi-Teshub and Hattushilish III, relations with Egypt gradually became more peaceful, and a treaty of friendship between the two kingdoms was finally concluded in the 21st year of Ramses II. Since an Egyptian copy of the text of the treaty may be seen today on the temple walls at Karnak, and a Hittite copy has come to light from the royal archives of the Hittite capital city Khattushash (Boghazköy), we are exceptionally well informed concerning it. The two documents contain a preamble explaining why the treaty was concluded and noting that diplomatic negotiations had preceded ratification of the pact. It contains, furthermore, a declaration of mutual nonaggression but, strangely, without defining the borders of their respective geographical spheres of influence. Their alliance included mutual assistance against external enemies and internal rebels, and an agreement on the part of each to surrender political refugees to the other. The two documents close with various divine sanctions against any king who might break the provisions of the treaty.

This treaty of friendship remained in force for the remainder of the existence of the Hittite kingdom. Thirteen years after its conclusion, Ramses married a Hittite princess, and a rich correspondence between the two royal houses testifies to the friendly relations that existed between them. When a famine ravaged Anatolia during the reign of Merneptah, son of Ramses II, the latter sent grain to the Hittites to alleviate their plight. After this event nothing more is heard of the Hittites. The excavations at Boghazköy have shown that the city was destroyed about 1200 B.C. by the People of the Sea, who at that time brought to an end the Hittite empire.

Ramses II and the 'Apiru - Many scholars have considered Ramses II to have been the Pharaoh of the oppression. This conclusion has been reached in the first place because Exodus 1:11 states that the store cities of "Raamses" and "Pithom" were built by the Hebrews. It is pointed out that Ramses II replaced the name Tanis with his own name when he embellished that city and made it his capital. He did not, however, completely abandon the city of Thebes, where he was later buried. In addition, his long reign, marked by great building activity throughout Egypt carried on by enormous numbers of slaves, among whom the 'Apiru (identified with the Habiru and Hebrews) are repeatedly mentioned, seems to many scholars to be weighty evidence for assigning the Egyptian slavery of the Israelites to the reign of Ramses II. To this is added some archeological evidence from Palestine, where the excavations of Tell Beit Mirsim, Bethel, and other places seem to indicate that these cities were destroyed in the 13th century B.C. and not in the 14th.

Against this theory, there exist some weighty objections. Definite chronological statements made in the Bible, such as those of 1 Kings 6:1 and Judges 11:26, cannot be harmonized with an Exodus that took place in the late 13th century, but require a date for the Exodus that lies at least two centuries earlier. The period of the judges, from Joshua to Samuel, cannot be compressed into a period of some 150 years without doing violence to the Biblical narrative of that part of the history of Israel.

Furthermore, an inscription of King Merneptah, who is considered by the defenders of the 13th-century Exodus to be the Pharaoh of the Exodus, also testifies against this theory, for this inscription claims that the king encountered and defeated Israelites in Palestine. Merneptah reigned only a few years, and if the Exodus had taken place under his reign, the Israelites, who wandered in the wilderness for about 40 years, would have still been at Sinai when he died. Thus, it would not have been possible for him to defeat them in Palestine. To accept Merneptah as Pharaoh of the Exodus requires, therefore, further corrections of the sacred records. Hence, it is assumed by the advocates of a 13th-century Exodus that not all the tribes of Israel had been in Egypt but that Merneptah met Israelites who had remained in Canaan.

Furthermore, evidence apparently favorable to an Exodus under Ramses II can be understood in such a way that it does not preclude the earlier Exodus recommended in this book. The names Rameses and Raamses in Genesis and Exodus, often pointed to as evidence of a 13th-century Exodus, probably represent a modernization of older names by later scribes (see on Genesis 47:11; Exodus 1:11). The 'Apiru mentioned in texts of Ramses II as slave laborers can be Habiru or Hebrews without assuming that they refer to the Israelites who were oppressed in Egypt before the Exodus, because Ramses II may have employed Hebrew slaves in his building activity while the Israelites were in Palestine. These slaves may have come into his hands through military activities in Palestine during the period of the judges. That the ruins of some Palestinian cities reveal no signs of destruction in the levels representing the 14th century B.C., but show them 150 years later, can also be satisfactorily accounted for. The destruction of some of the conquered cities in Joshua's time was not thorough, and the Israelites made no attempt to occupy them, but left them in the hands of the Canaanites (see on Judges 1:21, 27-33). It must also be remembered that not all identifications of ancient sites are certain. Tell Beit Mirsim, for example, has been identified with the city of Debir conquered by Othniel (Joshua 15:15-17), but no definite evidence came to light during the excavations that proved the correctness of an otherwise very plausible identification.

A Biblical chronology based on Solomon's beginning to build the Temple in the 480th year from the Exodus requires a 15th-century Exodus. Hence, the 13th-century Exodus must be rejected, as well as the

view held by many Biblical scholars, that Ramses II was the Pharaoh of the oppression and his son Merneptah the Pharaoh of the Exodus.

Merneptah - When Merneptah, thirteenth son of Ramses, came to the throne in 1232 B.C., he was already an old man, and had to cope with a serious invasion attempted by the Libyans. He claims to have successfully resisted this attempt and to have made 9,000 prisoners, among whom were also more than a thousand Greeks. On his victory stele, he also speaks of a campaign against several cities and peoples in Palestine, among whom are mentioned the Israelites. This important passage reads thus:

“Desolated is Tehenu [a Libyan tribe];
Hatti [the land of the Hittites] is pacified,
Conquered is the Canaan with every evil.
Carried off is Ascalon, seized is Gezer,
Yanoam is destroyed,
Israel is laid waste, it has no (more) seed.
Hurru [the land of the Horites] has become a widow for Egypt.”

This famous passage, already mentioned, shows that Merneptah had encountered the Israelites in one of his Palestinian campaigns, as their name, in connection with Palestinian cities, shows. Israel's location between the cities Ascalon, Gezer, Yano'am, and the land of the Horites or Hurrians is an indication where the king had met them. The first-mentioned cities lay in south western Palestine, whereas the name Hurru may either stand for the inhabitants of the south eastern part of the country (Edom), or be a general term for Palestine, as frequently used in Egyptian inscriptions. It is most interesting that the name Israel received the hieroglyphic determinative for “people,” and the other names have determinatives meaning “foreign country.” This indicates that the Israelites they encountered at that time were not considered a settled people, which agrees with the situation during the period of the judges as described in the Bible. Since Merneptah's campaign occurred during the period, when the tribes of Israel were still struggling for a foothold in Canaan, they could only be described on an Egyptian monument as an unsettled people—not as a nation with a fixed habitat.

Also from the time of Merneptah, come interesting records kept by officials guarding Egypt's northeastern frontier, officials who may be compared to modern immigration officers. These records contain the name and function of every person crossing the border, mostly couriers in Egypt's diplomatic service. Mention is also made of an Edomite tribe that was permitted to find temporary pasture for its flocks in the Nile Delta. These documents show that the frontier was well guarded, and that the crossing of the border was no easy matter for unauthorized individuals or groups, during the Nineteenth Dynasty.

The Twentieth Dynasty - The death of Merneptah marked the beginning of a period of political chaos in Egypt which lasted for several years. A number of kings followed one another on the throne in rapid succession, one even being a Syrian. The land was eventually rescued from this sorry state of affairs by a man of unknown origin named Setnakht, who became the founder of the Twentieth Dynasty. When he left the throne to his son, who became Ramses III (1198-1167 B.C.), Egypt once more had a strong and energetic king who saved his country from grave peril.

During the time of Egyptian weakness, preceding the reign of Ramses III the Libyans had infiltrated the fertile region of the Delta and formed an ever-increasing menace to the internal security of the country.

Their mere presence was a continual threat, because in case of an invasion, they could be expected to make common cause with their compatriots living beyond the western border of Egypt. In the fifth year of his reign, Ramses III went to war against the Libyans, and in a bloody battle defeated them decisively. He claims to have slain 12,535 of them and to have taken many thousands of captives.

The Peoples of the Sea - After averting the danger from the west, Ramses had to meet another, even greater, danger from the north east. The so-called Peoples of the Sea, from Crete, Greece, the Aegean Islands, and perhaps from Sardinia and Sicily, moved eastward. They overran and destroyed coastal cities of Asia Minor, such as Troy, then the Hittite kingdom, as well as a number of states in northern Syria, such as Ugarit, and marched down the coast of Phoenicia and Palestine in an effort to invade the greatest civilized country of their time, the fertile Nile valley. Among them were the Tjekker and the Philistines, the latter coming in ox-drawn carts with their families. Both tribes settled on the coast of Palestine after the migration of the Peoples of the Sea had ended. Realizing the seriousness of the situation, Ramses III met the enemy forces at the Palestinian border, in his eighth a serious defeat upon the would-be invaders, and destroyed their navy when it attempted a landing in one of the channels of the Nile. Although Ramses was thus able to save Egypt from invasion, he was not strong enough to drive the Tjekker and Philistines out of Palestine. Settling down, they controlled the rich coastal region for many centuries. In this, they were probably assisted by certain Philistine tribes that had arrived prior to the movement of the Peoples of the Sea, which brought strong contingents of racially related peoples into the country.

In Medinet Habu, a temple built by Ramses III in western Thebes and today the best preserved of all pre-Hellenistic Egyptian temples, the king depicted his battles in monumental reliefs. These pictures are of great value, for they show the features of the different peoples with whom Ramses fought. The Philistines appear in their typical feather helmets, by which they can always be recognized. There are also other Peoples of the Sea, the Sherden (probably Sardinians), the Siculi (Sicilians), the Dardanians from western Asia Minor, the Achaeans from the Aegean Islands, and other peoples, all with their typical helmets or other characteristic marks. These reliefs, depicting the warfare of that time on land and sea, thus form important illustrative source material for a correct understanding of the racial movements that took place in the lands of the eastern Mediterranean during the period of the judges of Israel, but movements that did not affect the people of Israel themselves.

The Israelites lived in the hinterland of Palestine, and the main thoroughfares along the coast witnessed the decisive battles of the time. However, in the latter times of the judges the Philistines consolidated their hold on the coastal regions of Palestine and threatened the national existence of Israel. They extended their influence over the mountainous part of Palestine and subjugated Israel for decades. The struggle with the Philistines proved to be a long one, and the fight for liberty begun under Samson, continued under Samuel and Saul, and was completed only in the reign of David.

Ramses III not only succeeded in saving Egypt from external dangers but also promoted its internal security. One text remarks with satisfaction that once more “women could walk wherever they wanted without molestation.” From the close of his reign comes the great Papyrus Harris, now in the British Museum, which contains a summary of all the gifts the king had made to the various temples and gods, and of the property the temples had possessed before him. This valuable document is a major source of information on Egypt’s secular and ecclesiastical economy during that time. However, two main problems are posed by this manuscript: (1) Were the gifts of the king added to former holdings, or did

they consist of a royal confirmation of old possessions? (2) In what relationship do these gifts and holdings stand to the economy of all Egypt? Hence, this document has been interpreted differently by various scholars. Breasted thinks that about 8 per cent of the population of Egypt stood in the service of the temple, and that about 15 per cent of the land was ecclesiastical property. Schaedel, however, holds that the figures should be 20 per cent and 30 per cent respectively. Whatever figures are right, it is evident that ecclesiastical leaders played an important role in Egypt at that time, and that no king had a chance of survival unless he supported them.

Egypt in Decline - Ramses III apparently fell victim to a harem conspiracy, in which some of his concubines and at least one of his sons were involved, besides high state officials. Some of the judicial records dealing with the investigation of this case and the sentences imposed are available today. These documents throw interesting light on the judicial system of ancient Egypt, and indirectly on the case of the two courtiers who shared Joseph's prison during the time their cases were being investigated (see Genesis 40:1-3).

Ramses III was followed by a number of weak kings, every one of whom bore the name Ramses, numbered now as Ramses IV to XI (1167-1085 B.C.). During the period of their reign, Egypt experienced a steady decline of royal power and an equivalent increase of priestly influence. The priesthood of Amen, forming the most influential and powerful portion of Egypt's ecclesiastical citizenry, finally overthrew the dynasty and made its own high priest king.

With the deterioration of political and economic strength, Egypt's internal troubles became acute. Ramses III was the last king who held Beth-shan in the Valley of Esdraelon, which had been an Egyptian city for centuries. Although the base of a statue of Ramses VI was found during the excavation of Megiddo, there is not the slightest evidence that this king had any influence in Palestine. This bronze statuette may have been sent to Palestine as a gift. The last royal name mentioned in the inscriptions at the copper mines at Sinai is that of Ramses IV, showing that after him no more expeditions were sent to Sinai for mining purposes.

The loss of the last foreign holdings caused an increase of poverty and insecurity and caused inflation. A sack of barley rose in price from 2 to 8 deben. Spelt (a cheaper kind of wheat) rose from 1 to 4 deben during the reign of the kings Ramses VII to X, and later leveled off at 2 deben. As the cost of living rose, the revenue of the government fell off, with the result that it could not pay its officers and workers. This in turn resulted in strikes of government workers, the first recorded strikes in history. Several serious situations thus arose in places where many men were occupied on public works, for example, in western Thebes, where the upkeep of the tremendous royal necropolis with all its temples required a great force.

Another cause of the difficult situation was widespread official corruption. As an example, the case of an official may be cited, who was responsible for the shipment of grain from Lower Egypt to the temple of Khnum at Elephantine in Upper Egypt. When he was later tried for embezzlement, it was found that of 6,300 sacks of grain received in the course of 9 years, he had delivered only 576 sacks, or about 9 per cent of the total. The other 91 per cent of the grain had been embezzled by him, in collaboration with certain of the scribes, controllers, and cultivators attached to Khnum's temple. The records of that time tell also of bands of roving and plundering soldiers who were a scourge on the population, and of continual cases of tomb robberies. Since the population suffered under the economic stress of the times, while everyone knew that untold treasures in gold and silver were hidden in the royal tombs in the valleys of the kings

and queens in western Thebes, it is not surprising to read of attempts made to obtain some of those treasures. The available records of investigations of tomb robberies leave the impression that even officials were involved in the thefts. Such robberies occurred so frequently later on, that every royal tomb, with the exception of that of Tutankhamen, was eventually looted. Little if anything remained for the archeologist.

By the close of the Twentieth Dynasty (1085 B.C.) Egypt had reached one of the lowest points in its long and checkered history. Nothing of its former wealth and glory was left. Its envoys were despised in foreign lands, as the Wenamon story and a satirical letter reveal—as will be seen in connection with the history of the judges of Israel. Egypt had become a “bruised reed,” as an Assyrian officer mockingly called it several centuries later, in Hezekiah’s time (2 Kings 18:21). This weakness, which began in the time of the judges, proved a blessing to the young nation of Israel, which was thus able to develop without being hindered by a strong neighboring power.

The Kingdom of Mitanni (1600 B.C.–1350 B.C.)

The greatest rival of Egypt during the Eighteenth Dynasty was the kingdom of Mitanni in northern Mesopotamia. Although recent discoveries have thrown some light on the history of this obscure power, little is known of it. The site of its ancient capital, Washshukani, known from Hittite records, has not yet been discovered, although it is generally believed to have been in the upper Chabur region near Tell Halâf.

The ancient native population of the whole region consisted of Aramaeans speaking the Aramaic language, but the rulers were Hurrians, who had taken possession of the country in the 17th century B.C. “Hurrian” is the ethnic name of an Aryan branch of the great Indo-European family of nations, whereas Mitanni is the name of the state over which the Hurrians ruled. The names of their kings and high officials resemble Aryan names, and those of their gods are found in the Indian Veda: Mithras, Varuna, Indra, and Nasatya.

Although the beginning of the kingdom of Mitanni is obscure, it is known that Hurrians occupied this region about the 17th century, for the Hittites, under their king, Murshilish, fought the Hurrians on their return to Anatolia after the conquest and destruction of Babylon. However, it is not until the 15th century B.C. that the names of their kings appear in written source material, particularly in the Egyptian records of Thutmose III and Amenhotep II, with whom these kings had several encounters. However, toward the end of the 15th century, friendly relations between the royal houses of Egypt and Mitanni were established, so that for several successive generations, Egyptian kings took Mitanni princesses as wives. Artatama I of Mitanni gave his daughter to Thutmose IV; Shutarna II, his daughter Gilukhepa to Amenhotep III; and Tushratta, his daughter Tadu-khepa to Amenhotep IV. This is the time (14th century B.C.) of the Amarna Letters, which reveal, among other things, the friendly relations between Egypt and the Hurrians of Mitanni.

The reason for this change from hostility to friendship may have been the emergence of a new power in the north west, the Hittites. As the Hittites gradually extended their influence over all eastern Asia Minor, and attempted to make their influence felt in Syria and northern Mesopotamia—at that time either Egyptian or Mitanni territory—the two former enemies became friends out of necessity. But their joint endeavors were not strong enough to hold the vigorous Hittites in check for long, and under the weak

reign of Pharaoh Ikhnaton, it was apparent in Syria that Egypt no longer played a decisive role in Asiatic affairs. Hence, about 1365 B.C. Mattiwaza of Mitanni concluded a treaty of friendship with Shubbiluliuma, the powerful Hittite king of that time, and recognized his sovereign influence in Syria. The north eastern Hurrians had in the meantime founded a separate kingdom under the name of Hurri. The names of two of its kings (a son and grandson of Shutarna of Mitanni) are known, both from the 14th century B.C.

After the middle of the 14th century all ancient sources are silent concerning the Mitanni kingdom, but the Assyrian records from about 1325 to 1250 B.C. speak of a kingdom of Hanigalbat lying in the same region as the former Mitanni. Since the kings of Hanigalbat had Aryan names like those of the former Mitanni kingdom, it seems that Hanigalbat was the successor of Mitanni. It was, however, a country with little power and influence, and small in extent, inasmuch as its western regions had become part of the Hittite empire, and its eastern ones part of Assyria. This kingdom probably came to its end in the 13th century and broke up into several small city states, which were later absorbed by Assyria during its period of expansion.

Although the history of the Hurrian kingdom of northern Mesopotamia is still rather obscure, the above sketch is given because the Hurrians played an important role in the movements of races in the second millennium B.C. They extended their influence over much of the ancient world, reaching even to southern Palestine, as we know from Egyptian records. In the Bible the Hurrians are called Horims or Horites (see Genesis 14:6; 36:20, 21; Deuteronomy 2:12, 22). The importance of the Hurrians in Palestine can be seen from the fact that at certain periods the Egyptians called the whole land Kharu. It is possible that King Chushan-rishathaim of Mesopotamia, who oppressed Israel for eight years soon after Joshua's death and was finally defeated by Caleb's younger brother Othniel (Judges 3:8-10), was one of the Mitanni kings of the 14th century B.C. Because of the similarity of sound, Tushratta has been identified with Chushan-rishathaim, but it is thought the latter may have been one of the kings of the period after 1365 B.C. for which no records have been found so far.

The Hittite Empire From 1400 B.C.–1200 B.C.

The old Hittite kingdom, which early in its history destroyed Babylon, has been discussed previously. Hittite history before 1400 B.C. is not well known, and even the succession of kings is a matter of discussion among scholars. However, after 1400 B.C., the Hittite kingdom enters into the full light of history.

Its capital, Khattushash, lay inside the great bend of the Halys in Asia Minor, near the village of Boghazköy, which is not far from the present Turkish capital, Ankara. Being an Indo-European people, the Hittites were racially related to the Hurrians, from whom they took much of their religion, as well as products of the Mesopotamian civilization and culture that the Hurrians had accepted from the Babylonians and Assyrians. In this way, they took over the Babylonian cuneiform script, certain forms of art, literary products, such as epics and myths, and even gods and religious concepts. However, they by no means lost their own peculiar cultural values, such as their hieroglyphic script, which has only recently been deciphered.

The Hittites were a hardy and semi-barbaric nation whose products of art did not reach to the high level the Egyptians had attained, nor did they build temples like some of the other nations, but their laws show that they were much more kind hearted and humane than most of the other ancient nations.

Rise of Hittite Power - The first great king of the Hittites recognizable in history is Shubbiluliuma, who reigned from c. 1375 to c. 1335 B.C. A great catastrophe of a somewhat obscure nature had struck the nation a little before his accession to the throne. Although the records of this catastrophe are not clear, it seems that some subject nations of eastern Asia Minor had risen against their lords and destroyed the Hittite capital Khattushash. After Shubbiluliuma gained the throne, his first care was to rebuild the capital and to restore order in the kingdom. This was done through a number of campaigns. When the Hittite king once more was master over the different peoples of eastern Asia Minor, he turned against the rival kingdom of Mitanni. His first campaign seems to have been unsuccessful, because the Mitanni king Tushratta says in one of his letters to the Egyptian Pharaoh that he had gained a victory over the Hittites, but Shubbiluliuma must have had some success, as can be learned from another letter in the Amarna collection written by Rib-Addi of Byblos. Shubbiluliuma's second Syrian campaign was a complete success. He not only conquered the capital of the Mitanni kingdom but penetrated southern Syria to the Lebanon. When domestic troubles broke out in the family of Tushratta, with the result that he was killed, Shubbiluliuma placed Tushratta's son Mattiwaza, who had taken refuge with him, on the throne, and gave him his daughter as wife—thus binding the two royal houses together.

As already mentioned in the discussion of Egyptian history, it was at this time, when the Hittite king besieged the city of Carchemish on the Euphrates, that a request reached him from Tutankhamen's widow to send her one of his sons to become her husband and king of Egypt. The prince sent in response to this request was waylaid and murdered before reaching the country of the Nile. Upon receipt of the news of this crime Shubbiluliuma conducted a successful campaign against the Egyptians but was forced to retreat without being able to take advantage of his victory because of an outbreak of the plague, which ravaged the Hittite country for 20 years.

Four of Shubbiluliuma's sons became kings, two of them during their father's lifetime—one over Aleppo, another over Carchemish. A third son, Arnuwanda III, succeeded his father on the throne over the Hittite empire; and after his death, a younger brother, Murshilish II, gained the throne. A considerable number of contemporary documents provide ample information covering the reign of the last-mentioned king. He practically had to rebuild his father's empire because a number of revolts had broken out upon his father's death, and again when his brother Arnuwanda died. His life story is therefore filled with military campaigns against various peoples of Asia Minor, Syria, and Egyptian garrison forces.

The next king, Mutallu, also experienced a serious rebellion by a subject people, the Gashga, who succeeded in conquering and destroying the Hittite capital city of Khattushash, forcing the Hittite king to establish a temporary capital elsewhere. When, for some reason, the local kingdom of Amurru in northern Syria wanted to break its ties with the Hittites in favor of Egypt, to which it formerly belonged, Mutallu interfered, and with his allies forced Amurru to remain apart from the Egyptian Empire. It was at this moment that he met the Egyptian king Ramses II in the battle of Kadesh on the Orontes. Ramses had come to northern Syria to claim his old rights. The famous battle at Kadesh has already been described in connection with the history of the reign of Ramses II. Although Ramses II claimed to have won a victory, the battle ended in a draw, by which the Hittites gained some advantages. This conclusion is reached from

the fact that after the battle of Kadesh the Hittites occupied Syrian territory that had not formerly been under their suzerainty.

Friendship With Egypt - Urhi-Teshub, the next Hittite king, reigned uneventfully for seven years, when he was deposed and banished by his uncle, who made himself king as Hattushilish III. Relations with Egypt were still tense during the first years of his reign, as we know from a letter the Hittite king sent to the Babylonian king Kadashman-Turgu, in which he finds fault with Babylon for being too friendly toward Egypt. Later, however, he sought the friendship of Egypt and concluded a treaty with Ramses II in the latter's 21st year. This inaugurated a period of close cooperation between the two countries, strengthened by the marriage of Ramses II to Hattushilish's daughter 13 years later. The Hittites may have regarded the restlessness among the Aegean peoples as the harbinger of coming evil, and therefore desired friendly relations with their own eastern and southern neighbors—the Kassite rulers in Babylon and the Egyptians. These precautions were fruitless, however, since neither Egypt nor the Kassites of Babylon were strong enough to prevent the Hittites from falling prey to the irresistible advance of the Sea Peoples through Asia Minor, Syria, and Palestine.

The next three Hittite kings, Tuthaliya IV, Arnuwanda IV, and his successor, were comparatively weak rulers. Very few documents have survived to throw light on their reigns. One treaty with the vassal kingdom of Amurru in Syria provides for an embargo on Assyrian goods and prohibits Assyrian merchants from passing through their land. This shows that Assyria was now in the ascendancy and was considered an enemy. Merneptah of Egypt aided the Hittites during a severe famine in the reign of Tuthaliya IV by shipments of grain, but the power of the Hittites was now a thing of the past, and its downfall could not be delayed longer.

Fall of the Hittite Empire - About 1200 B.C. a great catastrophe brought the Hittite empire to a sudden end. This is attested by the sudden cessation of all Hittite documentary material at that time, and by the Egyptian statement that "Hatti was wasted." No power proved able to resist the Peoples of the Sea, who now poured through the countries of the north like a torrent. Archeological evidence agrees with these observations, showing that the cities of Anatolia were burned at this time after being overrun by enemies.

Hittite culture and political influence completely disappeared from Asia Minor with the extinction of the Hittite empire, though the previously subject city states of northern Syria and Mesopotamia carried on the Hittite culture and tradition for several centuries, until they themselves were absorbed by the Assyrians in the 9th century. Cities like Hamath on the Orontes, Carchemish on the Euphrates, and Karatepe on the Ceyhan River show a well-balanced mixture of native Aramaic, or even Phoenician culture, along with that of the Hittites. These were the Hittite states with which Solomon carried on a flourishing trade (2 Chronicles 1:17), and of whom the Syrians of Elisha's time were afraid when they lifted the siege of Samaria (2 Kings 7:6, 7). These city states are called Hittite kingdoms not only in the Bible but in the Assyrian records of their time also. In fact, the whole of Syria became known as Hittite country in Assyrian parlance of the empire period. When the cities of northern Syria were conquered and destroyed and their populations deported by the Assyrians in the 9th and 8th centuries B.C., all knowledge of the culture, language and script of the Hittites completely died out, and has been resurrected only recently from its sleep of more than two and a half millenniums.

The Rise and Growth of the Sea Peoples (1400 B.C.–1200 B.C.)

The Peoples of the Sea mentioned in Egyptian sources of the times of Merneptah and Ramses III have been mentioned in connection with the history of those Egyptian kings and in the account of the destruction of the Hittite empire. However, our sources about these peoples are very limited, and consist only of legends preserved by Homer, of Egyptian references to them, some archeological evidence, and a few Bible statements.

In various Egyptian documents recovered by archeologists the name Peoples of the Sea appears as a collective name for the Lycians, Achaeans, Sardinians (Sherden), Sicilians (Siculi), Danaeans, Weshwesh, Teucrians (Tjekker), and Philistines (Peleshet).

Egypt had always had some connections with the peoples of Crete, the islands of the Aegean Sea, and the mainland of Greece, as is evident from the presence of Egyptian objects in those areas and of Aegean pottery in Egypt. Up to the time of Amenhotep III, the pottery from Crete is found more frequently in Egypt than that of other Greek areas. Also, most of the Egyptian objects found in Europe up to this time appear on Crete. After Amenhotep III, relations with Crete seem to have been interrupted, since Egyptian objects from that time on have been found in only two places in Crete, whereas they have come to light in seven places on the mainland of Greece and on other islands, showing that stronger connections were developing with those areas. The archeological evidence at Crete shows, furthermore, that the rich culture of Crete called by archeologists Minoan II ended with the destruction of the great palace at Cnossus, an event which must have taken place between 1400 and 1350 B.C. This destruction was followed by the more primitive culture of the invading peoples.

Homeric legends about the destruction or disappearance of the formidable sea power of Atlantis may refer to Crete, which fell to these unknown invaders, who destroyed its culture as well as the power by which it had dominated other Greek tribes. This event is also reflected in the legend about a Greek hero, Theseus, who liberated the Greeks from subjection to Minos of Crete, in whose labyrinth lived the Minotaur. We shall probably never know precisely what happened, but it is clear that the subject nations of the Aegean banded together, and with their long ships fought against the galleys of Minos, which had for so long monopolized the lucrative trade with Egypt and other lands. The destruction of the Cretan fleet resulted in the invasion of the rich island and the destruction of its culture. From that time on, the trade of the central Mediterranean lay in the hands of the peoples of the Aegean Sea, particularly those of coastal Asia Minor and mainland Greece.

Migration of the Sea Peoples - But the migration of peoples did not stop with the destruction and occupation of Crete. By the 13th century, the western coasts of Asia Minor were overrun and permanently occupied by Greek-speaking peoples, and in the last years of Ramses II, the Peoples of the Sea and the Libyans entered the western Delta and extended their settlements almost to the gates of Memphis and Heliopolis. Merneptah, the son of Ramses II, had to face a mass invasion of these people, but was able to defeat them and save Egypt from this western menace. It was in his time that the great invasion of central Anatolia by the Peoples of the Sea took place. This marked the end of the Hittite empire and the destruction of rich, north Syrian cities like Ugarit (Râs Shamrah). Cyprus was also occupied by these western invaders. How the threat to Egypt was averted by Ramses III, who defeated these peoples in two decisive battles, has already been told.

The Philistines - After these unsuccessful attempts to take possession of the Nile country, most of the invaders who escaped from the Egyptian massacres and were not captured seem to have returned to the west. The Tjekker and the Philistines, however, stayed in the country. The latter found some related tribes in the southern coastal region of Palestine who had evidently lived there for centuries (see Genesis 21:34; 26:1; Exodus 13:17, 18), and appreciably added to their military strength. As a result the Philistines, who had formerly been so weak that they sought treaties with Abraham and Isaac (Genesis 21:22-32; 26:26-33), and had been so unimportant that their names never appear in the records of Egypt prior to the 12th century, now became the gravest menace of the Israelites, who occupied the mountainous hinterland of Palestine.

That the Philistines apparently belonged to the peoples that invaded and destroyed the ancient culture of Crete, can be gathered from such texts as Jeremiah 47:4, where the Philistines are called “the remnant of the country of Caphtor [Crete],” or Amos 9:7, where God is said to have brought up “the Philistines from Caphtor.” Other texts (1 Samuel 30:14; Ezekiel 25:16; Zephaniah 2:5) bring the Cretes and Philistines together as occupying the same territory. David seems to have had a bodyguard of Cherethites and Pelethites, that is, Cretans and Philistines (2 Samuel 15:18; 1 Kings 1:38, 44), similar to the custom of Ramses III, who made captured Philistines, Sardinians, and other Peoples of the Sea soldiers in his army. These foreign mercenaries, with 600 Philistines from Gath (2 Samuel 15:18), were practically the only soldiers who remained faithful to David at the time of Absalom’s rebellion.

Israel Under the Judges (1350—1050 B.C.)

The history of Assyria and Babylonia during the second half of the second millennium B.C. will be discussed in connection with their later history, since these nations played no important role in Western Asia during that time. However, after a survey of the history of the nations who surrounded the people of Israel during the time of their conquest of Canaan, and the period when they were either ruled by judges or oppressed by enemy nations, it is in order now to study the history of the people of God with whom the Bible is mainly concerned. Whatever is known of the history of the lesser nations of Canaan during this period will be mentioned at appropriate points rather than in separate sections.

Chronology of the Period - The time between the occupation of Canaan and the establishment of the Hebrew monarchy is known as the period of the judges. The chronology of this period hinges on the date of the death of Solomon. The working chronology adopted for this chapter puts Solomon’s death in 931/30 B.C., that is, in the Hebrew year running from the fall of 931 to the fall of 930. Hence, his beginning to build the Temple, in the spring month Zif of his fourth year (1 Kings 6:1), fell in 967/66, that is, in the spring of 966.

This was in the 480th year after the Exodus (1 Kings 6:1). Then Zif in the first year of the Exodus was 479 years earlier, in the spring of 1445 B.C., with the Exodus in the preceding month (Abib, 1445), and the crossing of the Jordan 40 years later (Joshua 5:6, 10) in 1405 B.C. Of the 480 years of 1 Kings 6:1, 40 are to be deducted for the reign of Saul (Acts 13:21), 40 for the reign of David (1 Kings 2:11), and 4 from the reign of Solomon. These 84 years deducted from the 480 years leave the coronation of Saul in the 396th year from the Exodus, or the 356th from the invasion of Canaan, giving us the years 1405-1051/50 B.C. for the period from Joshua to Samuel.

Another chronological peg is provided by a statement made by the judge Jephthah at the beginning of his term of office, that Israel had then “dwelt in Heshbon and her towns ... three hundred years” (Judges 11:26). These 300 years go back to the conquest of this area under the leadership of Moses, during the last year of his life (see Deuteronomy 2:26-37). This statement requires that the conquest under Joshua and the elders, together with the judgeships of Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, Deborah and Barak, Gideon, Tola, and Jair, as well as the intervening periods of oppression, be included within the 300 years between the conquest and the time of Jephthah.

To fit these periods into the 300 years does not present great difficulties, since it is reasonable to assume that some judges ruled contemporaneously—one perhaps in Transjordan and another in western Palestine, or one in the north and another in the south. It is also possible that some tribes in one part of the country enjoyed rest and security at a time when other tribes were oppressed. This is, for example, indicated in the oppression by the Canaanite king Jabin of Hazor, which was terminated by the victory of Deborah and Barak over Sisera, captain of Jabin’s army (Judges 4). In Deborah’s song of victory several tribes were rebuked for having failed to assist their brethren in the struggle for liberation from the tyranny of the oppressor (Judges 5:16, 17). These tribes probably saw no need for risking life so long as they themselves enjoyed a peaceful existence, as was the case for 80 years after Ehud liberated them from the oppression of the Moabites and Amalekites (Judges 3:30).

From Jephthah to Saul’s coronation was 57 years, according to chronological statements of the Bible. While Jephthah ruled over the eastern tribes, ending an 18-year oppression of the Ammonites, the Philistines began oppressing those in the west. They captured the ark in Eli’s time, after it had been at Shiloh for 300 years. During the time of this Philistine oppression, Samson harassed the pagan oppressor and began “to deliver Israel” (Judges 13:5). Samuel was probably also a contemporary of Samson, the latter operating in the south west, the other in the mountains of central Palestine (1 Samuel 7:16, 17). Samuel was the last judge to guide Israel wisely. For a long time he was the sole leader of his people before the first king, Saul, was chosen.

The relatively fixed chronology of Egypt during this period, and several key dates in the Biblical chronology, permit an experimental reconstruction of the period of the judges that leads to the following chronological synchronisms:

TENTATIVE CHRONOLOGY OF THE PERIOD OF THE JUDGES

Israel Under the Judges		Egyptian Kings		Hittite Kings
		<i>Eighteenth Dynasty</i>		
Invasion of Canaan	1405	Amenhotep III	1412-1375	Hattushilish II
Israel under Joshua and the elders	1405-1364	Ikhnaton, Smenkhkare		Tuthaliya III
			1387-1366	Arnuwanda II

Othniel's liberation from Chushan rishathaim's 8-year oppression	1356	Tutankhamen, Eye	1366-1353	Shubbiluliuma
Rest of 40 years	1356-1316	Harmhab	1353-1320	
		Nineteenth Dynasty		
				Arnuwanda III
		Ramses I	1320-1319	Murshilish II
		Seti I	1319-1299	
Ehud's liberation from 18 years of Moabite oppression	1298	Seti in Palestine	1319	
		Ramses II	1299-1232	Mutallu
80 years' rest of southern and eastern tribes	1298-1218	Battle at Kadesh	1295	
Deborah and Barak's liberation after Jabin's 20 years of oppression in the north	1258			Urhi-Teshub
				Hattushilish III
Rest in the north	1258-1218			Last weak Hittite kings
Gideon's liberation from 7-year Midianite oppression	1211	Merneptah and other weak kings	1232-1200	End of Hittite kingdom about 1200
		<i>Twentieth Dynasty</i>		
Gideon's rule	1211-1171	Ramses III	1198-1167	
Abimelech's kingship over Shechem	1171-1168	War against Peoples of the Sea	1194-1191	

Tola, Jair, Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon, Abdon	1168-1074	Ramses IV-XI	1167-1085	
Beginning of Philistine oppression	1119			
Samson's exploits	1101-1081	<i>Twenty-first Dynasty</i>		
Ark taken, Eli's death	1099			
Battle at Ebenezer, Philistines defeated	1079	(High priests of Amen as kings of Egypt)		
Samuel judge	1079-1050		1085-950	

The Peoples of Canaan and Their Culture - The earliest, aboriginal population of Palestine was non-Semitic, as is evident from the names of the oldest settlements, which are non-Semitic. Toward the end of the second millennium B.C., the Amorites invaded Canaan and for centuries formed its ruling class. The early Hittites, of whom only traces are recognizable in the texts coming from the time of their later empire period, also settled in certain parts of Palestine, as did the Hurrians, especially in the south. Of the 11 peoples called Canaanites in Genesis 10:15-19, the Hittites and Amorites have already been mentioned. Six of the others lived in Syria and Phoenicia; namely, the Sidonians and the Zemarites on the coast; the Arkites, with their capital Irqata, of the Amarna Letters, north of Tripoli; the Sinites, whose capital Siannu, mentioned in Assyrian records, is still unidentified; the Arvadites, with their capital Arvad in northern Phoenicia; and the Hamathites in inland Syria. Of the remaining three Canaanite tribes, the Jebusites, Gergashites, and Hivites, nothing is known from extra-Biblical sources.

All these peoples, living in a country situated between the two great civilizations of antiquity—Egypt in the south and Mesopotamia in the north—were strongly influenced by the cultures of those countries. Although Palestine and Syria had lived under the political Odominion of Egypt for centuries by the time of the Hebrew invasion, the cultural influences of Mesopotamia were stronger than those of Egypt. The reason for this strange phenomenon may lie in ethnic ties. Since all these peoples spoke Semitic languages closely related to those spoken in Babylonia and Assyria, they may have been more attached to the eastern culture than to that of their political overlords. Hence, we find that the Babylonian language and script were used in all correspondence between the different city rulers, and between them and the Egyptian court. The clay tablet served them as writing material, as it did their eastern neighbors. That the art of writing was extensively practiced is evident from the fact that cuneiform texts have been found in various Palestinian excavations, such as Shechem, Taanach, Tell el-Hesi, and Gezer, and from the hundreds of Amarna Letters which, although they were discovered in Egypt, originally came from Palestine and Syria.

Also, a new, alphabetic script, probably invented in the mining region of Sinai toward the end of the patriarchal period, was beginning to be used more extensively in the period under discussion. Short inscriptions written in alphabetic script have been found at Lachish, Beth-shemesh, Shechem, and elsewhere. They suggest that the people of that time were eager to write and were using the new script, because of its obvious advantages over the difficult and cumbersome cuneiform or hieroglyphic scripts with their many hundreds of characters.

The excavation of Palestinian cities dating from the period before the Israelites entered the country shows that the population had attained a high level of craftsmanship, especially in the building of city rock tunnels. The Jebusites, for example, dug a vertical shaft inside the city of Jerusalem, to a depth on a level with the spring Gihon, which was some distance outside the city in the Kidron Valley. From the bottom of this shaft they dug a horizontal passage to the spring, through which they were able to secure water from the spring in a time of emergency without leaving the city.

A magnificent water tunnel was also excavated at Gezer, consisting of a gigantic staircase about 219 ft. long cut out of solid rock. This tunnel is 23 ft. high at the entrance and about 13 ft. wide, but diminishes greatly toward the end. The roof is barrel shaped, and follows the slope of the steps. It ends at a large spring 94 1/2 ft. underneath the rock surface, and 130 ft. below the present surface level. The toolmarks show that the work was done with flint tools, and the contents of the debris reveal that the tunnel fell into disuse not long after the Hebrew invasion. How the ancient citizens of Gezer knew that they would strike a powerful spring at the end of their tunnel is still a mystery.

These engineering feats, which demonstrate the high level of material culture of the Canaanites at the time of the Hebrew invasion, are examples of many Canaanite accomplishments recently come to light.

The Religion and Cult Practices of the Canaanites - Though it is true that the pre-Israelite population of Palestine had already attained a high cultural level by the time of the conquest, their religious concepts and practices were most degrading. The excavation of Canaanite temples and sacred places has brought to light many cult objects of Canaanite origin. At Ras Shamrah, ancient Ugarit, many Canaanite texts of a mythological nature have been found. Written in an alphabetic cuneiform script, they have shed much light on the language, poetry, and religion of the Canaanites of the middle of the second millennium B.C. They constitute our main source of information on the religion of the land Israel invaded and conquered.

Palestine seems to have had a great number of open-air sanctuaries, called *bamoth*, “high places,” in the Bible. The Israelites were so attracted by these “high places” that they took them over and dedicated them to God, in spite of His explicit command that He be worshiped at one place only, the place where the sanctuary was situated (Deuteronomy 12:5, 11). Various prophets denounced these pagan places of worship (Jeremiah 7:31; 19:13; 32:35; Hosea 4:12, 13, 15; Amos 2:8; 4:4, 5), but it was most difficult to wean the people away from them. Even some of the best kings—Amaziah, Uzziah, and Jotham, for example—did not destroy them (2 Kings 14:3, 4; 15:4, 34, 35).

One of the best-preserved high places excavated in Palestine was found at Gezer, about halfway between Jerusalem and the coast. It was an open place, without any traces of building activity. However, it contained several caves, of which some were filled with ash and bones, probably the remains of sacrifices, since the bones were of men, women, children, infants, cattle, sheep, goats, and deer. Two of the caves were connected by a narrow winding tunnel, so that one of them could be used as a sacred place where

the inquiring worshiper might consult an oracle. Every whispered word spoken in the smaller cave can be heard clearly in the larger one. It is not impossible that a cult object, perhaps an idol, once stood in front of the hole in the wall that connected the two caves, and that the worshipers imagined they received answers to their prayers in this place. Similar oracle places are known to have existed in Greece and Mesopotamia. In the middle of the main cave was a large block of stone, on which lay the skeleton of an infant, perhaps the remains of the last child sacrificed in this place.

Aboveground a row of 10 stone pillars was found. The tallest of these pillars is almost 11 ft. high, the shortest, 5 1/2 ft. In Hebrew such a stone pillar is called *maṣṣebah*, “image” (see Levites 26:1; Deuteronomy 16:22; Micah 5:13), more correctly, “pillar” (RSV). It is not certain whether these pillars were connected with sun worship, or whether they were symbols of fertility representative of the “sacred” phallus erectus. Several altars were also connected with the high place, and on the rock floor were many cup-shaped holes probably used for the reception of libations, or “drink offerings.”

Another well-preserved high place has been found on one of the mountains near Petra, the capital of the Edomites. Although this sacred place is of a much later date (1st century B.C.), it probably differed little from similar places of earlier times. A great altar was cut out of the virgin rock. A stairway of six steps leads up to its fire hearth. In front of the altar is a great rectangular court, with an elevated platform in the middle, where the slaughtering of the sacrifice took place. A nearly square water tank has been hewn out of the rock, for use in connection with ablution rituals. This high place also has characteristic cups for pouring out libation offerings, and nearby there are obelisk-shaped standing pillars without which a high place apparently would have been incomplete.

Canaanite temples have also been excavated in Palestinian cities, such as Megiddo and Beth-shan. These sacred structures usually contain two rooms; the inner with a raised platform on which the cult image originally had stood served as the main sanctuary. However, the Canaanite cult was not limited to temples and high places. Numerous small stone altars found in Palestine show that the people had private shrines where sacrifices were offered. These stone altars were usually hewn out of one block of stone. The hearth was on the upper part, with four horns at the corners. Cult images have been found in great numbers in every Palestinian excavation. Most of these are little figurines representing a nude goddess with the sex features accentuated, showing that they were connected with the fertility cult, around which much of the Canaanite worship centered.

Canaanite Deities - At the head of the Canaanite pantheon stood El, called “the father of years,” also “the father of men,” who was symbolized by a bull. In spite of his being the highest titular god, he was thought to be old and tired, and hence weak and feeble. According to a later Phoenician scholar, Philo of Byblos, El had three wives, Astarte, Asherah, and Baaltis (probably Anath), who were at the same time his sisters. Also in the Ugaritic texts, Asherah is attested as El’s wife.

As patron of the sea, Asherah is commonly called “Asherah of the Sea,” but also “creatress of the gods,” and “Holiness,” in both Canaan and Egypt. She was usually represented in pictures and on reliefs as a beautiful nude prostitute standing on a lion and holding a lily in one hand and a serpent in the other. She seems to have been worshiped under the symbol of a tree trunk, “groves” in the KJV (2 Kings 17:10). She found ready acceptance among the Israelites, who seem to have worshiped cult symbols dedicated to Asherah almost continuously during the pre-exilic period, for they were in a deplorable state of apostasy most of the time.

Another important Canaanite goddess was Astarte, Heb. 'Ashtoreth', "the great goddess who conceives but does not bear." She is depicted as a nude woman astride a galloping horse, brandishing shield and lance in her hands. The Phoenicians attributed to her two sons, named according to Philo of Byblos, Pothos, "sexual desire," and Eros, "sexual love." Astarte plaques of a crude form are numerous in Palestinian sites excavated, but it is significant that they have not been discovered in any early Israelite level. This is true of the excavations carried on at Bethel, Gibeah, Tell en-Naşbeh, and Shiloh, showing that the early Israelites shunned the idols of the Canaanites.

Anath, the third major goddess of the Canaanites, was the most immoral and bloodthirsty of all deities. Her rape by her brother Baal formed a standing theme in Canaanite mythology, finding entrance even into the literature of the Egyptians. Nevertheless, she is always called "the virgin," a curious comment on the debased Canaanite concept of virginity. Her thirst for blood was insatiable, and her warlike exploits are described in a number of texts. It is claimed that she smote the peoples of the east and the west, that she lopped off heads like sheaves, and hands so that they flew around like locusts. She is then described as binding the heads to her back, the hands to her girdle, exulting while plunging knee deep into the blood of knights, and hip deep into the gore of heroes. In doing this, she found so much delight that her liver swelled with laughter. Moreover, she enjoyed killing not only human beings but also gods. For example, the death of the god Mot is attributed to her. He was cleft by her with a sword, winnowed with a fan, burned in the fire, ground up in a hand mill, and finally sown in the fields.

Baal, although not the chief god, played a most important role in the Canaanite pantheon. He was considered to be the son of El, the chief god, and a brother of Anath. Being held responsible for lightning, thunder, and rain, he was thought to bring fertility to the land of Canaan, which was entirely dependent on rain for agricultural purposes. At the beginning of the dry season, his devotees supposed, Baal was murdered by the evil god Mot, and the annual feast of his resurrection, probably at the time of the first rain, was an occasion of great rejoicing and festivity. Baal is the chief figure of all the mythological poetry of Ugarit, in fact, of all religious literature. When, in Elijah's time, Israel had turned to Baal worship, his impotence was clearly demonstrated by the withholding of rain for three years. God designed His people to learn that the introduction of Baal worship would not increase the fertility of their land, but would actually bring famine. At Mt. Carmel, Elijah gave a conclusive demonstration that Baal was helpless as a rain god, indeed, that he was nonexistent.

Besides the gods named, there was a host of other deities with minor functions, but space makes it impossible to give more than a cursory survey of the complex religion of the Canaanites, the various exploits of the Canaanite gods, their lust for blood, their vices and immoral acts. However, it may suffice to say that the Canaanite religion was simply a reflection of the morals of the people. A people cannot stand on a higher moral level than their gods. If the gods commit incest, adultery, and fornication, if they exult in bloodshed and senseless murders, their worshipers will not act differently. It is therefore not astonishing to learn that ritual prostitution of both sexes was practiced in the temples, that in these "sacred" houses homosexuals formed recognized guilds, and that on feast days the most immoral orgies imaginable were held in the temples and high places. We also find that infants were sacrificed on altars or buried alive to appease an angry god, that snake worship was widespread, and that the Canaanites wounded and mutilated themselves in times of grief and mourning, a practice that was prohibited among the Israelites (Levites 19:28; Deuteronomy 14:1).

Effects of Canaanite Religion - How their religious thinking influenced the Canaanites' way of life is well illustrated by the story of Naboth's death at the hand of Jezebel for refusing to give up his vineyard to Ahab (1 Kings 21). When Ahab's request was rejected by Naboth, the king was deeply offended and grieved, but he saw no reason for doing anything against Naboth. His wife, however, a Phoenician princess and passionate worshiper of Canaanite gods and goddesses like Baal and Asherah, immediately proposed a way to have Naboth killed and his property impounded.

In Ugaritic literature, a similar story is found. The goddess Anath desired to possess a beautiful bow belonging to Aqhat. She requested him to give the bow to her in return for gold and silver. When Aqhat refused to part with his bow and advised her to have one made for herself, she tried to change his mind by promising him eternal life. This being to no avail, she plotted his destruction and secured possession of the coveted bow. We do not know whether Jezebel knew this story, and whether she was influenced by it or not, but it is not strange that a woman who was educated in an environment where such stories were told about the gods would have no scruples about applying similar means to achieve her purpose.

Because of the depravity of the Canaanites, Israel was commanded to destroy them. An understanding of the religion and immorality connected with Canaanite worship explains God's severity toward the people who practiced it.

The Crossing of the Jordan River - Bible critics declare that the story of Israel's crossing the Jordan is an incredible myth, that it would be utterly impossible that the river should cease its flow for the space of time required for so vast a multitude to pass over. The fact is, history records at least two instances during the past 700 years when the Jordan suddenly ceased flowing and many miles of the river bed remained dry for a number of hours. As the result of an earthquake, on the night preceding December 8, A.D. 1267, a large section of the west bank opposite Damieh fell into the river, completely damming its flow for 16 hours. This is the very location where, according to the Bible record, "the waters which came down from above stood and rose up upon an heap" (see on Joshua 3:16). Near Tell ed-Dâmiyeh, the Biblical city of Adam, not far from where the Jabbok flows into the Jordan, the river valley narrows into a gorge that makes such an occurrence as the complete blocking of the river a comparatively simple matter.

On July 11, 1927, the river ran dry again. A landslide near the ford at Tell ed-Dâmiyeh, caused by a severe earthquake, carried away part of the west bank of the river, thus blocking its flow for 21 hours and flooding much of the plain around Tell ed-Dâmiyeh. Eventually, these waters forced their way back into the usual channel. For historical data on these two instances see John Garstang and J. B. E. Garstang, *The Story of Jericho* [1940], p. 136, 137; D. H. Kallner-Amiram, *Israel Exploration Journal*, Vol. I [1950-1951], pp. 229, 236.

In the light of this evidence critics, reversing themselves, will no doubt now wish to dismiss the Jordan miracle of Joshua's day as simply a natural phenomenon, the result of an earthquake. Any explanation, no matter how incredible, seems better to some men than admitting that God performs miracles. We would ask: How could Joshua know a day ahead that an earthquake would block the river 20 miles upstream? Even more incredible, how could he know the exact moment of the earthquake, in order to direct the priests bearing the ark to march forward so that their feet would reach the riverbank just when the water ceased to flow (see Joshua 3)? Are these Bible critics able to produce earthquakes? Or can they even predict the hour or the day when one will occur and regulate its effects so as to accomplish their objectives? The answer is No And this resounding No wipes out forever their foolish objections to the

simple Bible statement that a miracle occurred. Whether or not God caused an earthquake upon this occasion, we know not; we do know that He shakes the earth and makes it tremble (Psalms 60:2; Isaiah 2:19, 21) and that the elements fulfill His will (Psalms 148:8). But the very shaking of the earth, though described by men as an earthquake, is in this case of the Jordan truly a miracle.

The Invasion of Canaan Under Joshua - Jericho was the first city that blocked the way of the invading Hebrews. The Jericho of Joshua's time has since the Middle Ages been identified with the mound Tell es-Sultân, which is situated close to modern Jericho and not far from the river Jordan. In excavating the ancient ruins of the city Prof. John Garstang found the remains of city walls that showed signs of destruction he attributed to an earthquake. Various reasons led him to the conclusion that he had found the ruins of Joshua's Jericho. But further excavations, in the 1950's, under the direction of Dr. Kathleen M. Kenyon, yielded evidence that would assign those walls to an earlier century and uncovered no remains that could be assigned to Joshua's time except a portion of a house and some pottery in the tombs outside the city indicating burials there in the 14th century. Unfortunately, the top levels of that mound have been so badly destroyed, particularly by erosion, that the later remains have been virtually obliterated. It is questioned whether the site will ever provide archeological evidence that will shed light on the Bible story of the fall of Jericho (Joshua 6).

From the Bible, however, we know that this city, the first one conquered by the Israelites, fell as the result of a divine act of judgment that the Canaanites had brought upon themselves. The strongly fortified city was suddenly destroyed and its contents and population—with the exception of Rahab and her family—were given to the flames.

The next city taken after the fall of Jericho was the little town of Ai (Joshua 8). Archeologists have identified Ai with the ruins of et-Tell, excavated during three seasons under Mme. Judith Marquet-Krause, from 1933 to 1935. However, this identification cannot be correct, since the city uncovered was one of the largest of ancient Palestine, whereas the Bible speaks of Ai as a place much smaller than Jericho (see Joshua 7:3). Furthermore, excavation has shown that et-Tell was destroyed several centuries before the Israelite conquest, and had been in ruins for hundreds of years when Jericho fell to the Israelites. However, as Vincent has proposed, it is possible that the city ruins served as a habitation for a small population in the time of Joshua, because the name Ai means "ruin." This view may be correct, or the real location of the town may yet be discovered.

The Conquest of Central Canaan - With the fall of Jericho and Ai the central part of Canaan lay open before the invaders. When the Israelites proceeded inland they found to their consternation that they had been deceived by the inhabitants of Gibeon and other cities, with whom they had but a short time previously concluded an alliance of mutual assistance, not knowing that their new allies were inhabitants of Canaan. Hence, the Israelites could not take their cities, and were even obliged to assist them when they were attacked by neighboring city kings who resented the Gibeonite alliance with Israel (Joshua 9).

To fulfill a command previously given by Moses, the Israelites went to Shechem, built an altar, and inscribed the law on a plastered stone monument (see Deuteronomy 11:29-32; Deuteronomy 27:1-8; Joshua 8:32-35). Half of the people stood on Mt. Ebal and the other half on Mt. Gerizim, while the blessings and curses prescribed by Moses were read to them. The Bible does not explain how it was possible for the Israelites to take possession of the region of Shechem, in the central part of the country. The impression, however, is gained that no hostilities preceded their taking possession of this section of

the land. Although the Bible is silent concerning events that led to the surrender of Shechem, an Amarna Letter (No. 289) written a few years later by the king of Jerusalem to Pharaoh probably contains information as to how the Israelites gained possession of the Shechem region. In this letter, the king of Jerusalem complains that the Habiru (Hebrews) had become so strong that there was danger that he and other kings who still withstood them would have to surrender their own cities as Shechem had been surrendered. The significant passage reads, "To us the same thing will happen, after Labaja and the land of Sakmi [Shechem] have given [all] to the Habiru [Hebrew]." There is therefore reason to conclude that the king of Shechem followed the example of the Gibeonites and surrendered without a fight.

In order to punish those cities that had voluntarily surrendered to the Israelites, the Amorite king of Jerusalem made an alliance with four other princes of southern Palestine and threatened to take Gibeon. Responding to an urgent Gibeonite plea for help, Joshua marched against the five kings and defeated their armies in the memorable battle of Azekah and Makkedah, for which the day was lengthened in response to Joshua's prayer. The five kings fell into Joshua's hands and were killed, and in the ensuing campaign a number of Canaanite cities in the south were taken. However, no attempt was made either to annihilate the defeated populations or to occupy their cities. On the contrary, the Israelites, after taking Canaanite cities, apparently returned them to their inhabitants, and retreated to their camp at Gilgal on the Jordan (Joshua 10).

Later, a campaign against a hostile alliance under the leadership of the king of Hazor, in the north, was undertaken. In the resulting battle of Merom (Lake Huleh) the Israelites were once more victorious. Although they destroyed Hazor completely and pursued their fleeing enemies, they made no attempt at permanent occupation of this part of the country, but left it to their defeated foes as they had the southland (Joshua 11).

The only other military campaigns carried out during the period of the conquest were those of Caleb against Hebron, of his brother Othniel against Debir (Joshua 14:6-15; Joshua 15:13-19; Judges 1:10-15), and of the tribes of Judah and Simeon against Jerusalem (Judges 1:3-8). However, many of the cities taken during the several campaigns were not occupied, as, for example, Jerusalem (see Judges 1:8); cf. verse 21 and 2 Samuel 5:6-9, Taanach (see Joshua 12:21; cf. Judges 1:27), Megiddo (see Joshua 12:21; cf. Judges 1:27), Gezer (see Joshua 12:12; cf. 1 Kings 9:16), and others. The Biblical records tell also that whole regions, such as Philistia, Phoenicia, and northern and southern Syria (Joshua 13:2-6), remained unoccupied.

The Conquest of Canaan a Gradual Process - The conclusion derived from these different statements is that during the period of the conquest an attempt was made only to gain a foothold. Various local kings and coalitions were defeated, because they contested the right of the Hebrews to settle in western Canaan. However, no serious attempts seems to have been made by the Israelites to dislocate all the Canaanites from their cities and strongholds, although a few cities were definitely taken into possession at that time. Having spent the last 40 years in the desert as nomads, the Hebrews seem to have been satisfied to settle down as tent dwellers in Canaan. As long as they found pastures for their cattle and were not molested by the native inhabitants, they had no desire to live in fortified cities like the Canaanites. Though Joshua divided the country among the 12 tribes, this division was largely in anticipation of their occupying fully the respective areas. This can clearly be seen from a study of the lists given in Joshua 15 to 21, in which

numerous cities are mentioned that were not possessed until centuries later. However, as the Hebrews became stronger, they made the Canaanites tributary (Judges 1:28) and eventually dispossessed them.

This process was gradual and took centuries, not being complete before the time of David and Solomon. It is possible that in Acts 13:19, Paul refers to this long period of conquest, from Joshua to Solomon. According to the earliest New Testament manuscripts, this text reads, “When he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, he gave them their land as an inheritance, for about four hundred and fifty years” (RSV), meaning that it took them about 450 years before the whole land was actually taken into possession as an inheritance.

This picture of a gradual conquest of Canaan by the Hebrews, from piecing together all the Scriptural evidence, is supported by historical evidence, as can be learned from the Amarna Letters and other extra-Biblical sources of that period and the ensuing centuries. The Amarna Letters, all written during the first half of the 14th century B.C., give us a good picture of what happened during that time. Many of these letters originated in Palestine and testify vividly to the chaotic conditions existing in the country, according to Canaanite views.

Most instructive are the letters of Abdu-Kheba, the king of Jerusalem, who complained bitterly that the king of Egypt turned a deaf ear to his petitions for assistance, since the Habiru—probably the Hebrews (see on Genesis 10:21; Genesis 14:13)—gaining power in the country, while he and other local rulers of the land were fighting a losing battle against them. In one letter (No. 271), he wrote: “Let the king, my Lord, protect his land from the hand of the Habiru, and if not, then let the king, my Lord, send chariots to fetch us, lest our servants smite us.” Venting his chagrin over the fact that all his pleas had been unsuccessful, and that he had received neither weapons nor forces, he asked in all earnestness: “Why do you like the Habiru, and dislike the [faithful] governors?” (No. 286). He warned the Pharaoh in the same letter: The “Habiru plunder all the lands of the king. If there are archers [sent to assist him in his fight] in this year the lands of the king, my Lord, will remain [intact], but if there are [sent] no archers, the lands of the king, my Lord, will be lost.” He then added a few personal words to the scribe who would read the letter to the Pharaoh, asking him to present the matter in eloquent words to the king, since all the Palestinian lands of the Pharaoh were being lost.

These few quotations from the letters of Abdu-Kheba of Jerusalem, which could be multiplied many times, may suffice to show how the Canaanites themselves viewed the political conditions of their country during the time of the conquest and immediately after the period described in the book of Joshua. These letters reveal that many Canaanite princes, like those of Jerusalem, Gezer, Megiddo, Accho, Lachish, and others, were still in possession of their city states decades after the Hebrews had crossed the Jordan, but that they were in mortal fear that their days were numbered, and that the hated Habiru would take their thrones and possessions.

This picture agrees well with that gained from a study of the Biblical records. However, the names of the kings of the Amarna Letters are not the same as those mentioned in the Bible as rulers of the same cities. The king of Jerusalem is called Adoni-zedec in Joshua 10:1, but Abdu-Kheba in the Amarna Letters. Gezer’s king was Horam, according to Joshua 10:33, but Yapahu, according to the Amarna Letters, etc. This difference is easily accounted for if the time element is taken into consideration. The Canaanite kings mentioned in Joshua were defeated and killed by the Hebrews very soon after the invasion of the

country began in 1405 B.C., whereas the kings mentioned in the Amarna Letters lived several years later, when the Hebrews had settled down in the country, and taken possession of several regions.

That some of the cities already mentioned, like Jerusalem, Gezer, Megiddo, and others, remained in the hand of native princes or Egyptian governors for centuries after the invasion of the Hebrews is attested not only in the Bible but also by other records. The important Canaanite fortress of Beth-shan, for example, is mentioned in Judges 1:27 as an unconquered city among those allotted to Manasseh by Joshua. This fact is corroborated by a notice in an Amarna Letter (No. 289) that the ruler of Gath had a garrison in Beth-shan, which means that the Israelites could not have possessed the city at that time. Toward the end of the 14th century Seti I of Egypt occupied the city, during his first Asiatic campaign, and erected victory steles in its temples. The presence of a similar stele of Ramses II and other Egyptian monuments of the 13th century B.C. excavated in recent years in the ruins of Beth-shan, prove, furthermore, that this city remained in Egyptian hands for a long time while the Hebrews occupied great parts of the land. The same is true of Megiddo and some other cities.

The period of the Judges - This period of approximately 300 years has been well characterized in the closing words of the book of Judges (chapter 21:25) as a time when “every man did that which was right in his own eyes.” It was a period of alternating strength and weakness, politically and religiously. Having gained a foothold in the mountainous parts of Canaan, the people of Israel lived among the nations of the country. They established their sanctuary at Shiloh, where it remained for the greater part of the period. Most of the people lived like nomads in tents, and possessed few of the cities of the country. They were split up into tribal units and lacked national unity, which would have given them strength to withstand the many foes about them on all sides. The song of Deborah shows clearly that even in times of crisis and dire need some tribes remained aloof from their afflicted brethren, if they themselves were not affected by the oppressors.

Living thus among the Canaanites the Hebrews were brought into close contact with the religion of the country and its cult system. This seemed so attractive to many that great sections of the people accepted the Canaanite religion. The repeated periods of apostasy were always followed by periods of moral weakness, a situation that provided their more powerful enemies an opportunity to oppress them. In such periods of distress a strong political leader invariably arose and, driven by the Spirit of God, led His people—in whole or in part—through repentance back to God. Being usually a military leader at the same time, he will rallied one or more tribes around himself and liberated those that were oppressed. Each of these great leaders was called a “judge,” *shopet* in Hebrew. This title included more power and authority than the English word suggests. They provided spiritual and political leadership, as well as judicial and military functions.

The Early Judges - The first of these judges was Caleb’s younger brother Othniel, who liberated his nation from an eight-year oppression by the king Chushan-rishathaim of Mesopotamia, probably one of the Mitanni princes whose name has not yet been found outside the Bible—which is not at all strange in view of the fact that Mitanni source material is fragmentary. This period probably coincided with the last years of the Eighteenth Dynasty of Egypt—the reigns of Smenkhkare, Tutankhamen, Eye, and Harmhab—when one king followed another in rapid succession.

It was probably about this time that Seti I, the first strong Pharaoh of Egypt in many years, invaded Palestine and crushed a Canaanite rebellion in the eastern part of the Valley of Esdraelon. That Canaanite

cities were restored to Egyptian suzerainty did not affect the Israelites, who probably had not taken part in the rebellion, and possessed no cities the Egyptians could claim as their own. However, it is possible that Seti I had an encounter with some Hebrews of the northern tribe of Issachar, because he mentions on a poorly preserved monument found at Beth-shan, that the “Hebrews [‘Apiru] of mount Jarmuth, with the Tayaru, were engaged in attacking the nomads of Ruhma.” Although Tayaru and Ruhma have not yet been identified, Jarmuth was one of the cities that Joshua allocated to the Levites in the territory of Issachar (Joshua 21:29). Seti I may thus have fought against some Hebrews of the tribe of Issachar, perhaps punishing them for attacking his allies, but the consequences for the Hebrews seem not to have been far reaching, or the Biblical records would have so indicated. However, it should never be forgotten that the book of Judges, reporting the history of Israel during almost 300 years, contains only a fragmentary record of all that happened during this long period.

Ehud, the second judge, liberated the southern tribes from an 80-year oppression by Moabites, Ammonites, and Amalekites by killing Moabite king Eglon. The 80 years of rest that the southern tribes enjoyed after Ehud’s heroic act coincided in part with the long reign of Ramses II of Egypt. This Pharaoh marched through Palestine along the coastal road, which was not in Israelite hands, to meet the Hittite king at Kadesh on the Orontes at the famous battle of Kadesh. Here, both Ramses and the Hittites claimed victory. Otherwise, Ramses seems not to have been seriously concerned about his Asiatic possessions. He kept garrisons in the Palestinian cities of Beth-shan and Megiddo, which lay in the Valley of Esdraelon, and probably also in certain strategic coastal cities. So long as the Israelites did not contest his possession of these cities, their settlement in the mountainous parts of Palestine was of no concern to the Pharaoh.

In several inscriptions, Ramses II does mention that Hebrew (‘Apiru) slaves were engaged in his various building activities in Egypt; hence, we conclude that Hebrews occasionally fell into the hands of his army commanders in Palestine. It is also possible that these Israelites were made slaves by the Canaanite king Jabin of Hazor, when for 20 years during the reign of Ramses II he oppressed the Hebrews. The heroic leadership of Deborah and Barak put an end to this unhappy situation.

Gideon’s Judgeship - The 80 years of rest that had followed Ehud’s liberation of Israel from Moabite oppression in the south was broken by a Midianite oppression lasting 7 years. It was probably during this period also that Merneptah, son of Ramses II, made the raid into Palestine of which he boasts in the famous Israel Stele. Here he claims to have destroyed Israel, so that it had no “seed” left. His record obviously reflects the usual Egyptian tendency to exaggerate, and his claim to have utterly destroyed Israel is therefore not to be taken seriously. Nevertheless, it seems certain from his remarks that he encountered Israelites somewhere in Palestine upon this occasion.

Gideon, one of the outstanding judges, liberated his people from Midianite oppression, smiting a great foreign army with a small band of faithful, alert, and daring Israelite warriors. The story of his exploits and judgeship reveals also that intertribal strife flared up from time to time, and that the people had a strong desire for a unified leadership, expressed in their offer of kingship to Gideon—an honor he wisely declined.

Momentous events took place during the 40 years of Gideon’s peaceful judgeship. While Israel lived in the mountainous part of Palestine, the Peoples of the Sea moved along the coastal regions, during the reign of Ramses III, in their unsuccessful attempt to invade Egypt. Bloody battles on land and sea were fought during this time. The Egyptian victories over these invaders eventually turned the tide of this great

migration of peoples and saved Egypt from one of the gravest perils that ever threatened its national existence, prior to the Assyrian invasion. Some of the defeated tribes again turned northward toward Asia Minor, whence they had come. Others, however, settled in fertile coastal regions of Palestine. Among these were the Tjekker, in the vicinity of Dor, to the south of Mt. Carmel in the lovely Plain of Sharon, and the Philistines, who strengthened related tribes that had occupied some coastal cities of southern Palestine for a long time. The Israelites, who may have followed with great anxiety the momentous events that took place so close to their habitations, did not yet realize that these Philistines would soon become their most bitter foes.

When Gideon died after a judgeship of 40 years, his son Abimelech, with the help of the people of Shechem, usurped the rulership by killing all his brothers and proclaiming himself king. His rule, however, lasted only three years, and ended, as it had begun, in bloodshed. It is questionable whether his so-called kingdom extended its power beyond the vicinity of Shechem.

The Later Judges - After him came the judges, Tola of Issachar (23 years) and Jair of Gilead (22 years). No important events are recorded of their time, a fact that seems to indicate that the 45 years of their rulership were rather uneventful.

After Jair's death, two oppressions began at approximately the same time, one in the east by the Ammonites, which lasted for 18 years and was ended by the freebooter general, Jephthah, and one in the west of 40 years' duration by the Philistines. This Philistine oppression had more disastrous effects on the Hebrews than any of the previous times of distress.

As already noted, Jephthah made an important chronological statement (Judges 11:26) at the time he began his war of liberation against the Ammonites. He claims that by that time Israel had lived for 300 years in Heshbon and nearby cities which had been taken from the Amorite king Sihon under the leadership of Moses, and that the Ammonites had no right to contest Israel's possession of these cities. Jephthah's six years of judgeship must therefore have begun approximately 300 years after the end of the 40 years of desert sojourning, and hence about 1106 B.C.

While the eastern tribes were afflicted by the Ammonites those in the west endured the fury of the Philistines. Having consolidated their position in the coastal region of southern Palestine, where they were not molested by the extremely weak successors of Ramses III of Egypt, the Philistines turned their attention toward the hinterland and subjugated the neighboring Israelite tribes, especially Dan, Judah, and Simeon. This oppression began at the time when Eli was high priest, in whose household Samuel grew up as a boy. Soon after the beginning of this oppression, Samson was born, and upon reaching manhood, he harassed the oppressors of his nation for 20 years, until they took him captive. Endowed with supernatural strength, Samson caused the Philistines much harm. If his character had been disciplined, he might have become the liberator of Israel instead of dying an ignominious death. It may have been during those years that the Philistines won the battle at Aphek and captured the ark, killing also the two sons of the high priest Eli. This battle marked the lowest point in the history of Israel during the period of the judges, some 300 years after the tabernacle had been moved by Joshua to Shiloh. Hence, the date for this event is about 1100 B.C.

After the disastrous battle of Aphek, Samuel began his work as spiritual leader of Israel. However, he was not immediately ready to wage a successful war against the Philistines, with their superior strength and

war techniques. The oppression went on for another 20 years, but ended with the victory of the Israelites under Samuel at the battle of Ebenezer (1 Samuel 7:13). After Ebenezer, Samuel began a peaceful and highly successful judgeship over Israel. This must have continued for about 30 years, until he bowed to the popular demand for a king. Samuel's sons, whom he had appointed as his successors, proved unfit as leaders and were rejected by the people.

With Saul's coronation as king of the entire nation the heroic age ended and a new era began. Prior to this time Israel's form of government was a theocracy, since the rulers were, presumably, appointed by God Himself and led by Him in the performance of their task. The new form of government began as a kingship with the ruler appointed by God, but soon developed into a hereditary monarchy. (The theocracy formally ended at the cross.

NOTE: It is not possible to assign exact dates for the various judgeships and for other events of this period. The dates here given are only suggestive. The dates given for Egyptian kings are approximately correct.

Conditions During the Time of the Judges - The sorry conditions prevailing in Palestine during most of the time of the judges are also reflected in two literary documents from Egypt. These are so interesting and enlightening that a short description of their contents must be given here. The first is a satirical letter in which the journey of a mahar (an Egyptian envoy) through Syria and Palestine is described. The document comes from the second half of the 13th century B.C., and may have been contemporary with the Midianite oppression to which Gideon put an end.

The document describes the Palestinian roads as overgrown with cypresses, oaks, and cedars that "reached to the heavens," making travel difficult. It is stated that lions and leopards were numerous, a detail reminiscent of Samson's and David's experiences (Judges 14:5); (1 Samuel 17:34). Twice, thieves were encountered by the envoy. One night they stole his horse and clothing; on another occasion, his bow, sheath knife, and quiver. Also, he met Bedouins, of whom he says that "their hearts were not mild." Shuddering seized him and his hair stood up, while his soul "lay in his hand." However, not being himself a model of morality, he was caught in an escapade with a native girl at Joppa, and paid for his freedom only by selling his shirt of fine Egyptian linen.

This story, written in the form of a letter, whether true or fictitious, shows a remarkable knowledge of Palestinian topography and geography. Among many other well-known places, it mentions Megiddo, Beth-shan, Accho, Shechem, Achshaph, and Sarepta. The story vividly illustrates the state of insecurity found in the country, where bad roads, robbers, and fierce-looking Bedouins were common. The description of the sad conditions met in Palestine reminds one of the experiences of the traveling Levite described in Judges 19, and the statement that "every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25).

The second story written in the first half of the 11th century B.C., at the height of the Philistine oppression after the ark was taken in the battle of Aphek, describes the journey of Wenamon, an Egyptian royal agent, to the Phoenician port city of Byblos to purchase cedarwood for the bark of Amen. Wenamon was sent by the priest-king, Heri-Hor of Thebes, and had been given a divine statue of the god Amen to protect him on the way and give him success in his mission. However, he was given only about 1 1/4 lb. of gold and 7 3/4 lb. of silver as money to purchase the desired cedarwood.

Wenamon left Egypt by ship, but when he reached the Palestinian port city of Dor, which was in the hands of the Tjekker, his gold and silver were stolen from him. He lodged a complaint with the local king, who refused to take any responsibility for the theft. After Wenamon had spent 9 days in Dor without finding either his stolen money or the thief, he stole about 7 1/2 lb. of silver himself, and then sailed for Byblos. However, the king of Byblos refused for 29 days to see him, and ordered him out of his city. On the 29th day after his arrival, one of the king's pages had a visionary frenzy in the name of Amen and advised the king to grant Wenamon an interview. During this interview, the king was extremely impolite, and asked for official credentials, telling Wenamon that for a previous shipment of cedars 250 lb. of silver had been paid. He made it clear that he was the master of the Lebanon, that he had no obligations toward Egypt, although he admitted that his people owed much to the culture of the Nile country.

The king of Byblos finally agreed to send a shipment of cedar to Egypt, and received a shipload of hides, papyrus scrolls, royal linen, gold, silver, etc., from Egypt in payment. The desired cedars were then cut and loaded, at which time the Phoenician king reminded Wenamon that a previous emissary had waited 17 years at Byblos and finally died there without getting his cedar. This was intended to point out to Wenamon that in Asia the prestige of Egypt had dwindled to nothing, and that its ambassadors no longer deserved the respect they had formerly been accustomed to receive.

When Wenamon was finally ready to leave the harbor of Byblos and set sail for Egypt, he found the Tjekker waiting with their ships to catch him and his load of cedarwood. He managed, however, to flee with his ship to Cyprus, where he barely escaped death by the hands of unfriendly natives. Unfortunately, the papyrus breaks off at this point of the narrative, and the rest of the story is therefore not known. It must, however, have had a happy ending, or the Egyptians would not have written and preserved it.

The story of Wenamon's mission is also instructive in that it highlights the chaotic political conditions of Palestine during the period of the judges. It shows that Egypt had lost all authority in Syria, and that an Egyptian envoy, whose arrival in former ages would have spread awe, could now be treated with contempt and disdain. We see, furthermore, that traveling was insecure, that people robbed and were robbed, and that no one was ever sure of his life.

Egypt in Decline—Dynasties Twenty-one to Twenty-five (1085—663 B.C.)

The period under discussion shows Egypt at a very low level. Source material is scarce, and great gaps exist in our historical knowledge of this period. Also, Egyptian chronology for this period is uncertain, and depends on brief Bible references and Mesopotamian records. Since but a few of the Egyptian kings of this period are mentioned either in the Bible or in cuneiform sources, all dates preceding 663 B.C. are only approximately correct.

Priest-Kings of the Twenty-first Dynasty (1085—950 B.C.) - The Twentieth Dynasty, the weak Ramessides, ended about 1085 B.C. Tanis, in the eastern Delta, remained the political center. There, Smendes, whose origin is obscure, managed to become king, while Heri-Hor, the high priest of Amen, proclaimed himself king of Thebes, the earlier Upper Egyptian capital. The two rival kings had little political power, and the cultural level of Egypt fell rapidly. Although a grandson of Heri-Hor married a daughter of a king of Tanis, political unity was not achieved. The low ebb of Egypt's political power

during this period is apparent from the treatment Wenamon received on his mission to Byblos, as already noted. One of the last kings of this dynasty was probably Solomon's Egyptian father-in-law (1 Kings 3:1).

The Libyan Twenty-second and Twenty-third Dynasties (950—750 B.C.) - It is unknown how the change from the Twenty-first to the Twenty-second Dynasty occurred. The first king of the new dynasty, Sheshonk, the Biblical Shishak, was a Libyan army commander, and may have usurped the throne about 950 B.C. During the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Dynasties Libyans had been brought to Egypt in great numbers as prisoners of war. Many were then used as soldiers in the wars of Ramses III against the Peoples of the Sea. They served a number of kings as mercenaries. Some achieved honor and office, as, for instance, a family in Heracleopolis in the northern part of Upper Egypt, of whom several members served as officers in the army and others became governors of Egyptian cities and districts.

When Sheshonk came to the throne, he was able to do away with the priestly dynasty at Thebes. Making one of his own sons high priest of Amen, he once more bound Thebes, the religious center, to the monarchy and achieved political unity in Egypt. The new king was engaged for several years in restoring orderly conditions in the country, and was successful to a certain degree.

As soon as he had a free hand in Egypt, Sheshonk turned his attention to Asia, where he made a determined effort to reconstitute the former empire. In this attempt, he was favored by the death of King Solomon and the splitting up of the kingdom of Israel into two rival states. Sheshonk's Palestinian campaign in Rehoboam's fifth year is briefly described in 1 Kings 14:25, 26, and 2 Chronicles 12:2-4. The Egyptians invested and spoiled many Judean and Israelite cities, among them the rich city of Jerusalem, whence Solomon's treasures were removed to Egypt. Sheshonk erected victory steles in Palestine. A fragment of one of these has been found at Megiddo, and a statute of the king was unearthed in the excavations of Byblos. When Sheshonk returned to Egypt, he celebrated his triumph and had a list of conquered cities engraved on one of the walls of the great Amen temple at Karnak, where about 100 names of Palestinian cities have escaped the destructive forces of nature and man during the past three millenniums. Among these, we discover such well-known names as Taanach, Megiddo, Beth-shan, Mahanaim, Gibeon, Beth-horon, Ajalon, and others. Although the campaign was a temporary success, Sheshonk was not able to hold Asia and permanently force his will upon it. The attempt to reorganize the Asian empire was a failure. Egypt lacked its former strength, and had definitely become a second-rate power.

The location of the tombs of the kings of the Twenty-first to Twenty-third Dynasty was unknown until Prof. P. Montet, the French excavator of the ruins of Tanis, discovered some royal tombs of the Twenty-first and Twenty-second Dynasties in that city. Some of the tombs were unspoiled. However, they did not contain such fabulous treasures as the tomb of Tutankhamen, although some beautiful gold and silver objects came to light in these tombs. A very fine golden bracelet from the tomb of Sheshonk's grandson bears an inscription stating that it had been given to him by his grandfather. It may actually have been made of gold and came into Sheshonk's possession from the treasures of King Solomon. The tomb of Sheshonk I has not yet been discovered. It may contain valuable information concerning his Asiatic campaign.

Sheshonk's successors of the Twenty-second as well as the Twenty-third Dynasty, probably all Libyans, were weak kings. The 15 kings of the 2 dynasties reigned for about 200 years (C. 950-750 B.C.), but Egypt was merely a shadow of its former self. It neither played a role in world politics nor produced any

works of architecture or art comparable to the products of earlier ages. Its real condition is fittingly characterized a little later by Rab-shakeh, the Assyrian army commander of Sennacherib who said, literally, to the men of Hezekiah, “You are relying now in Egypt, that broken reed of a staff, which will pierce the hand of any man who leans on it. Such is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who rely on him” (2 Kings 18:21). Though his remarks actually referred to Egypt of the Twenty-fourth Dynasty, no words could better describe the political weakness of the Libyan dynasties.

The Twenty-fourth Dynasty, of Saïs (750—715 B.C.) - It is unknown how the Libyan rule of Tanis ended, or how it was replaced by the short-lived Twenty-fourth Dynasty of native Egyptian princes, but about 750 B.C. Lower Egypt found itself in the hands of Tefnakht of Saïs, in the western Delta. Of this king, it is known only that he attempted to conquer Upper Egypt, which, with the important city of Thebes, was held by the Ethiopians.

Of Tefnakht’s son Bocchoris, as the Greeks called him—his Egyptian name was Bakenrenef—we have hardly any contemporary information, but later Greek authors tell many stories about him. He was, according to these sources, a wise king and a great lawgiver. After a short reign of five years (720-715 B.C.) he was deposed by the first king of the Ethiopian Dynasty and burned to death.

It is necessary to point out in this connection that we have only a very fragmentary knowledge concerning conditions in Egypt during this time. It is possible that several kinglets in addition to Tefnakht and Bocchoris ruled over sections of Lower Egypt. In 2 Kings 17:4, “So king of Egypt” is mentioned as having induced Hoshea to revolt against Assyria. Although one Egyptian monument (in the Berlin Museum) contains the hieroglyphic royal name “So,” and the Assyrian sources mention him under the name of Sib’u, we have no further information about this king who probably ruled over a small area of the Delta.

The Ethiopian Kings of the Twenty-fifth Dynasty (C. 715—663 B.C.) - Nubia, today partly in Egypt, partly in Sudan, was generally called Ethiopia by classical authors. Hence, the Ethiopian kings of ancient times were Nubians and did not come from the Abyssinian highland, as the term Ethiopian might indicate.

Nubia belonged to Egypt during most of its historical period up to the Twenty-first Dynasty. Although Egyptian kings occasionally had to subdue rebellions, Nubia usually had been rather quiet and had caused little trouble. However, the time of Egyptian rule ended in the 10th century B.C. during the time of the weak rulers of the Twenty-first Dynasty, when Nubia shook off the Egyptian yoke and founded an independent kingdom with its capital at Napata, near Mt. Barkal and the Fourth Cataract of the Nile. The Egyptian religion, which had been introduced to Nubia during the many centuries of Egyptian rule, was retained, and the Amen cult was practiced in a more conservative style than in Egypt itself.

In his excavation of Napata, the American Egyptologist G. A. Reisner uncovered pyramids, temples, and palaces. He was able to reconstruct the history of Nubia from the 10th century to about 300 B.C. and to give us the list of kings who ruled in Napata in unbroken sequence until the capital was moved for some unknown reason to Meroë (about 130 miles [209 km.] north of Khartoum), where the Meroëtic kingdom existed until A.D. 355 and in turn gave way to the Abyssinian power of Axum.

After Nubia gained its independence in the 10th century B.C. and thereafter remained in isolation for about 200 years, it looked with envious eyes toward Egypt, whose political feebleness obvious to

everyone. About 750 B.C., the Nubian king Kashta marched north and took all of southern Egypt, including Thebes, the most famous and glorious of all Egyptian cities. The highest ecclesiastical power of the Amen temple at Thebes was Shepenupet II, the daughter of King Osorkon III of the Twenty-third Dynasty, called the “god’s wife.” The office of high priestess had already existed for a long time, and was usually held by a princess of royal blood, by way of securing the loyalty of the priesthood of Amen to the ruling house of Egypt. Kashta forced the officiating “god’s wife” to adopt his own daughter as her successor, and thus bound the priesthood of Amen and the tremendous possessions of that god to his dynasty.

Piankhi, the son and successor of Kashta, felt that his rule over Upper Egypt was threatened by Tefnakht of Saïs, for which reason he marched north and conquered the remaining part of Egypt. His campaign is described on a great stele, containing one of the most detailed and interesting historical texts that has come down to us. Although all Egypt was conquered by Piankhi, he withdrew from the Delta again and left Tefnakht in possession of it. Shabaka, however, the next Ethiopian king, put an end to the Twenty-fourth Dynasty by defeating and killing Bocchoris in 715 B.C., as has already been related.

Piankhi, having conquered all of Egypt, made Thebes his capital. It was the last time that the old and venerated city became the center of Egyptian life and culture. Once more great building activities were carried on, as in the best days of the Eighteenth Dynasty. However, the new glory lasted only a little a little more than 50 years (715-663 B.C.), and came then to an inglorious end, as the Assyrians invaded Egypt and destroyed Thebes.

Egypt in Decline - Piankhi’s successors were Shabakak, Shabataka, Taharka, and Tanutamon. According to recently published documents Taharka came to the throne about 690 B.C., at the age of 20, as coregent with his brother Shabataka. This co regency continued till the death of the latter six years later. From then on Taharka was sole ruler until 664 B.C., when his nephew Tanutamon ascended the throne. Taharka is known from the Bible under the name of Tirhakah (2 Kings 19:9). We are told there that Sennacherib, when besieging Libnah in Judea, probably after 690 B.C., heard that Taharka was approaching with his army to aid Hezekiah and save Judah from impending annihilation. However, there is no evidence that Taharka really intervened actively in Hezekiah’s favor. The rumor may not have been true. It is actually with reference to the Ethiopian Dynasty that the statement of Rabshakeh (2 Kings 18:21) was made, a statement that was true not only at that time, but also later, in the time of Nebuchadnezzar.

Difficulties in other parts of the Assyrian Empire which required Sennacherib’s full attention elsewhere, and the catastrophe Sennacherib’s army suffered in Palestine, save Egypt temporarily and postponed the end that was evidently soon to come to the proud but feeble kingdom on the Nile.

Esarhaddon, the next Assyrian king, conquered Egypt in 670 B.C. for seven years made it an Assyrian province. We have recovered the famous victory stele of Esarhaddon set up in the north Syrian site of Zenjirli. It depicts the kings of Tyre and Egypt (Taharka) as prisoners of the king of Assyria, the former being depicted as a larger figure than the latter, since the king of Tyre was considered more important than the king of miserable Egypt.

On a stele found in Napata, Tanutamon, the last Ethiopian king who ruled over Upper Egypt, tells that a dream led him to attempt the conquest of Egypt anew. He succeeded in winning most of Upper Egypt and even took Memphis, the Lower Egyptian capital, but could not expel the Assyrian garrisons from the

Delta. His success was short-lived, however, and he had to retreat when Assurbanipal marched against him and conquered Thebes. This city, the most beautiful of all ancient Egyptian cities, was completely destroyed. Two of its tall obelisks were transported to Assyria to demonstrate to the Assyrians and the world that a new day had come, and that the Egyptian power had been broken forever. The words of the prophet Nahum reflect the tremendous impression that the destruction of Thebes, the queen of all ancient cities, made on contemporaries (Nahum 3:8).

The Assyrian Empire (933—612 B.C.)

The Assyrian Empire period is only an episode in the long history of this world, but to the student of the Bible it is of great importance because of the decisive role Assyria played in the history of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. This importance can be seen from the fact that Assyria and its people are mentioned some 150 times in Scripture. Six illustrious Assyrian kings are mentioned by name in the Bible, and the names of 10 Hebrews kings—6 of Israel and 4 of Judah—appear in the royal Assyrian inscriptions. Furthermore, the fact that the kingdom of Israel came to its sad end at the cruel hands of the Assyrians, and that Judah almost shared Israel's fate, should be reason enough for a careful study of Assyrian history. This enumeration of contacts between sacred and profane history at the time of the Assyrian Empire period shows clearly how important is a knowledge of the history of that nation for a correct understanding of the events that took place during the period of the Hebrew kings.

The homeland of Assyria was situated on the upper Tigris, north of the Little Zab, one of the eastern tributaries of the Tigris. Thence, Assyria extended in a north westerly direction for about 80 miles along the river Tigris. The Assyrians moved their capital from one place to another several times during their history. Assur, the most ancient capital, was not far from the Little Zab, and on the west bank of the Tigris. A short distance north was Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta, founded by the king whose name it bore, Tukulti-Ninurta. At the confluence of the Great Zab and the Tigris lay Calah, now called Nimrud, and farther to the north Nineveh, the largest and most famous of Assyrian cities. This capital, about 50 miles from Assur, was oblong in shape, with walls of an approximate total length of 8 miles and with 15 gates. A few miles to the north of Nineveh lay the capital of Sargon II, Dur Sharrukin, now called Khorsabad.

The Assyrians were Semitic Akkadians, closely related to the Babylonians as far as race, language, and civilization go. They were numerically a small nation, but distinguished themselves as ambitious merchants, daring and courageous warriors, and prudent though ruthless political leaders and statesmen.

Assyria was stony, and lay near mountains where good stone could be quarried. Hence, much stone was used for the building of monumental and public edifices such as palaces and temples. The Assyrians became masters in the handling of stone, as the many huge slabs lining their palace and temple walls show. However, this art is particularly apparent from the winged, human-headed bulls or lions that flanked the city and palace gates. Each was hewn out of one block of stone and weighed about 40 tons. The art of cutting stone was practiced not only in the handling of monumental reliefs and sculptures but also in the engraving of smaller objects such as cylinder seals. These exhibit skilled craftsmanship.

Assyrian Religion - The religion of the Assyrians was similar to that of the racially related Babylonians; in fact, many Babylonian deities were adopted and worshiped, as, for instance, Marduk, Ishtar, Tammuz, and others. The chief god was Ashur, the ancient local god of the city that carried his name. He was

depicted as a winged sun that protected and guided the king, his principal servant, but was worshiped also under the symbol of a tree representative of fertility. The influence of other nations was also apparent on Assyrian religion. In this way, some peoples, such as the Amorites, gained power over the Assyrians during the first half of the second millennium. Thus, the gods Dagan and Adad gained recognition. Other conquerors of Assyria, like the Indo-European Hurrians of Mitanni, left behind them their religious concepts. Hence, we find in Assyrian religion little that was purely national and much that had been borrowed from other cultures.

In Assyria, the king was neither a god, like Pharaoh in Egypt, nor the representative of the god, as in Sumeria. He was Ashur's chief priest and general, who carried out his god's desires and military campaigns, periodically giving account of the faithful fulfillment of his duties through "letters to the god," of which some have been preserved to the present day.

Assyrian Chronology - The Assyrians invented a method of designating years that, in a modified form, was later followed by the Greeks and the Romans. High officials, including the king, were appointed once during life to serve for one year as limmu, an honorary office requiring the performance of no duties except that of giving his name to the year in which he was limmu. The Greek equivalent of the Assyrian limmu is the word eponym; hence, the chronological lists containing the names of limmu are called Eponym Canons. These lists are of great value in reconstructing the chronology of Assyria, particularly that of the period to 900 to 650 B.C.

Assyria Before Tiglath-pileser I (to 1112 B.C.) - The princes of Assur had been vassals of the ruling dynasties of southern Mesopotamia when Illushuma (1850 B.C.), in the time of the dynasties of Isin and Larsa, made himself independent and succeeded in extending his power over great areas that previously belonged to his overloads. His son Erishum (1825 B.C.), and more so his great-grandson Sargon I (1780 B.C.), seem to have played with the idea of world dominion. This can be gathered from the name Sargon bore, in imitation of the great hero and founder of the empire of Akkad, and also from his program of political expansion. Successful military campaigns strengthened the young independent nation and extended its territory. Business relations were opened with foreign countries, and trading colonies and outposts were established. Through the archives of colonies in Asia Minor (the so-called Cappadocian tablets) much information concerning the extent of Assyrian commercial activities has become available.

However, the short period of Assyrian independence ended soon after the death of Sargon I. Commercial connections with Asia Minor were broken, and Assyria itself became a bone of contention between two emerging powers, the Elamites and the Amorites. The Amorites Shamshi-Adad I (1749-1717 B.C.), who claimed that his father Ilukapkapu had been king of Assur, succeeded in making himself king of Assyria. Like his great contemporary, Hammurabi, the Amorite king of Babylon, Shamshi-Adad planned to become sole ruler of Mesopotamia, as his title reveals, "King of the Universe" being the most significant one. He conquered the great city of Mari on the Euphrates and made his son its king. A victory stele found in the Syrian city of Mardin reveals, furthermore, that he also extended his power over northern Syria. When he died, the strongest opponent of Hammurabi was gone. His son and later descendants were not able to continue his policies, and Assyria degenerated once more into a second-rate power. It is not certain that Hammurabi and his successors ever exercised sovereignty over Assyria.

Next came the Hurrians of Mitanni, who overran Assyria and made it part of their empire. The Assyrian kings mentioned in the king lists for this period cannot have been more than vassals. It was Eriba-Adad

(1390-1364 B.C.) who began his reign as Mitanni's vassal and referred to himself as priestly prince of Assur. Upon the death of Tushratta and the collapse of Mitanni, he once more became a free and independent king.

In Ashur-ubalit I (1364-1328 B.C.), Eriba-Adad's son, we find once more an Assyrian ruler who sought to advance the power of his country. He was a contemporary of the Egyptian revolutionary king Ikhnaton; in fact, two of Ashur-ubalit's letters to that Pharaoh have been found in the Amarna collection. In the first, he calls himself merely king of the land Assur, but in the second, he designates himself as brother of the Pharaoh. By this, he claims to be great king, having taken the place in world politics formerly held by the king of Mitanni. Ashur-ubalit was an energetic ruler and knew how to achieve his aims. He occupied Upper Mesopotamia as far as Carchemish, and forced Kassite Babylonia to recognize his supremacy over southern Mesopotamia.

It was necessary, however, for the work of Ashur-ubalit to be repeated several times by his successors before Assyria's power over all Mesopotamia was recognized even to a limited degree. Hence, we read in the royal annals that successive kings led repeated military campaigns against Hanigalbat, the name by which the land of Mitanni was known in later times. They fought also against the more powerful Hittites to the west. The fortunes of war were not always on Assyria's side, and territories that had been gained by painful campaigns were often lost. However, these continual wars seem to have strengthened the martial spirit of the numerically small people of Assyria, and gained for it the respect of other great nations. As a result, the kings of the Hittites, Egypt, and Babylon were finally forced to recognize the little king of Assur as "brother," in acknowledgment of his claim to be a great king. Thus, the 13th century saw three great Assyrian kings, Adadnirari I, Shalmaneser I, and Tukulti-Ninurta I.

Adadnirari I (1306-1274 B.C.), of whom long inscriptions are known, was a great conqueror. He defeated Babylonia and established a new southern frontier of Assyria that incorporated the region of Kirkuk. He fought against the Gutti and Lullupi in the Zagros Mts., and overran all Hanigalbat, destroying its capital and building an Assyrian palace there.

Shalmaneser I (1274-1244 B.C.) practically repeated the campaigns of his father, and also defeated eight allied kings of the land of Urarti (later Urartu), the Armenian region around Lake Van, in later times one of the most formidable enemies of Assyria. Adadnirari founded the city of Calah and moved the capital from Assur to the new city.

The next king, Tukulti-Ninurta I (1244-1207 B.C.), who again moved the capital to a new location, Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta, was extremely temperamental and fanatical. He became the first Assyrian warrior-king whose ruthless methods of warfare are also well known from the later empire period. Elaborate historical records report his campaigns against Subartu in northern Mesopotamia, the Nairi lands of Urartu, where he claims to have defeated 43 local kings, the Gutti and Elamites in the eastern mountains, the Ahlamu (Aramaeans) of the desert, and the Babylonian. He captured the Babylonian king and brought the sacred Marduk statue of Babylon to Assur. However, his rule over Babylon was of only short duration, because the Babylonians, supported by the Elamites, shook off the Assyrian yoke soon after the capture of their city.

Tukulti-Ninurta's end marks the conclusion of the first period of Assyrian conquests, which had now lasted for about a century. Assyria then declined under a series of insignificant kings. There are no

indications that the Sea Peoples, which at this time subdued the Hittite empire and invaded Syria, had anything to do with this period of Assyrian weakness, mostly during the 12 century B.C.

Tiglath-pileser I and Later (1113—933 B.C.) - The Assyrian ideal of world dominion found a worthy champion in the person of Tiglath-pileser I (1113-1074 B.C.). The Assyrians apparently never lost sight of this ideal, which from the 14th century to the 7th was pursued consistently whenever circumstances were favorable. During the first years of his reign, Tiglath-pileser began to re-establish the earlier empire of Tukulti-Ninurta I. He reported his accomplishments in the now-famous documents he deposited in the foundation of the Anu and Adad temple at Assur, and which were used in 1857 to prove that the young science of Assyriology had come of age. Copies of these texts were then given to four scholars who, independently and correctly, translated each of them, thus proving that the riddle of cuneiform script had been solved.

The king carried out campaigns in the northern Nairi lands, then went against the Mushki, who had recently pushed east from Asia Minor. Eventually, he reached the Black Sea, and also forced Malatia in Hanigalbat to pay tribute. After the completion of his northern campaigns, he turned southward, took the Babylonian cities Dur-Kurigalzu, Sippar, Babylon, and Opis, but allowed the defeated Babylonians to retain a certain amount of independence.

When Tiglath-pileser marched into Syria to cut cedars of Lebanon for his buildings, the Syrian and Phoenician princes, among them those of Sidon and Byblos, paid tribute. However, Tyre, trusting in its island impregnability, refused. Arvad invited the king to a trip on the Mediterranean, where he hunted a sea monster. Even the Pharaoh of Egypt cautiously sent gifts to the powerful Assyrian monarch, among them a crocodile, which the king publicly exhibited in Assur. However, Tiglath-pileser found it difficult to keep back the pressure of the Aramaeans, who came against him in wave after wave.

This Assyrian king was a true empire builder, and his kingdom was at least equal in importance to those of the Hittites of Egyptians of former ages. But there was one great difference between the former empires and the new one. By those earlier empires vassals had been considered as human beings, and a certain generosity was frequently shown toward defeated enemies. The Assyrians, however, had but one aim—to subject every nation to the might of their god Ashur. Accordingly, they left their foes the choice between unconditional subjection and annihilation.

The Aramaeans, whom Tiglath-pileser's military genius held in check, proved too strong for his successors. The Aramaeans met no resistance in Babylonia, and infiltrated more and more into the areas that the Assyrians had claimed as their own. For almost a century and a half after Tiglath-pileser's death Assyria was pressed back to its home country on the Tigris and played the role of a secondary power, while the Aramaeans pressed their conquest of Syria and northern Mesopotamia and founded numerous city states. The Aramaean tribes of the south, better known as Chaldeans, in the meantime took over Babylonia and formed a dynasty which, though frequently interrupted by the Assyrians during the centuries that followed, nevertheless remained unbroken until the middle of the 6th century B.C.

The Resurrection of Assyria From Ashur-dan II to Shalmaneser III (933—824 B.C.) - Another strong Assyrian king rose up in the person of Ashur-dan II (933-910 B.C.). As a worthy descendant to Tiglath-pileser I, he reorganized, first of all, Assyria's military and economic forces, and then began the reconquest of the Aramaean parts of Mesopotamia. The royal annals tell of how the Assyrian kings

annually led their armies to the north and north west. The five kings following Ashur-dan II, Adadnirari II (910-889 B.C.), Tukulti-Ninurta II (889-884 B.C.), Ashurnasirpal II (884-859 B.C.), and Shalmaneser III (859-824 B.C.), each the son of his predecessor, seem to have been possessed by only one desire—the defeat of the Aramaeans and the reconquest of their territory.

Perhaps no other century of antiquity saw so much bloodshed as the 9th and nowhere else were so many lives sacrificed as in northern Mesopotamia and Syria during the reigns of the five aforementioned kings. Hardly ever have treaties been concluded and broken so frequently as in this period. The people of the subject nations, who repeatedly witnessed the murder of their loved ones and the destruction of their homes and fields, seem to have considered the frequent Assyrian expeditions to be divinely ordained plagues (see Isaiah 10:5), whereas the Assyrian kings on their part seem to have felt it a sacred duty to avenge with fire and sword the continual rebellions of their subjects.

Adadnirari II, having conquered the land of Hanigalbat, including its capital, Nisibis, broke with the custom of requiring annual tribute and made the land an Assyrian province. When Ashurnasirpal II reconquered this country following another revolt, he did it with such inhuman cruelty that a revolt in this region never again proved possible. He was successful in extending the Assyrian Empire once more to its approximately size of the time of Tiglath-pileser I. But there was one important difference—Assyria was now ruled with an iron hand, and mercy was unknown wherever Ashurnasirpal held sway. The empire was divided into provinces ruled by Assyrian governors. The provinces consisted of organized districts with cities as centers. The populations of these provinces were pressed by the Assyrian tax collectors to the point that they lived for only one purpose, to pour out tribute to satisfy the insatiable thirst of the Assyrian monarch.

Shalmaneser III, who came to the throne at an advanced age in 859 B.C., not only knew how to keep his father's empire intact but was successful in extending it into new areas. He was the first Assyrian king to have contact with the little kingdom of Israel. Israel had developed into a respectably large kingdom during the reign of David and Solomon, when Assyria and Egypt were too weak to interfere. However, the breakup of the Hebrew kingdom into two states after Solomon's death (931/30 B.C.) coincided with the resurrection of Assyrian power when Ashur-dan II came to the throne in 933 B.C., and Assyrian eyes again turned greedily toward the west. Yet, as long as the battle was waged only against the states in northern Mesopotamia, Israel had not much to fear from the powerful state on the Tigris; but when the danger of being overrun came nearer and nearer with every new king and each new expansion of the Assyrian Empire, the kings of Israel have felt increasing alarm. Finally, they were drawn into this conflict, as Judah was also eventually.

Whether Ahab, who is mentioned as one of the allies fighting against Shalmaneser III at Qarqar in 853 B.C., took part in the anti-Assyrian alliance of his own volition or whether he was forced to do so by Damascus (Syria) is uncertain. This will be discussed in the section on the history of the divided kingdom of Israel and Judah. From now on, royal Assyrian inscriptions mention Israelite kings rather frequently. During the next 130 years, there were many clashes of interest between the two powers, until the kingdom of Israel followed the example of other Syrian and Palestinian states in becoming an Assyrian province.

It would lead too far a field to follow Shalmaneser III on his numerous campaigns, of which good records in word and picture are extant; nevertheless, a short outline of his military accomplishments is necessary in order to understand the political situation in Western Asia during the time of the prophets Elijah and

Elisha. The Assyrian king conquered, first, Til-Barsip, capital of the powerful Aramaean state of Bit-Adini on the upper Euphrates. The population was deported to Assyria, and Assyrian colonists were moved into the area. Til-Barsip was rebuilt and called “Shalmaneser’s castle.” Henceforth this city became the headquarters and point of departure for several campaigns against city states in Cilicia and Syria, whose conquest opened the silver mines of the Taurus Mts. and the forests of the Amanus Mts. to the land-hungry Assyrians.

In Syria 12 allied princes, including Ahab of Israel, met Shalmaneser at Qarqar in 853 B.C. Adadidri of Damascus (the second of three Ben-hadads mentioned in the Bible) was the leader. Although Shalmaneser claimed in high-sounding words to have won a brilliant victory, he could not hide the fact that his first encounter with the Syrian opponents had ended at best in a draw, perhaps even victory, for the allies. However, Shalmaneser did not forget his objective, and in 848 made a second attempt against practically the same coalition. Again, the allies withstood him successfully, and even his third campaign was not a full success. When Hazael followed Adadidri on the throne of Damascus, the Assyrian king marched up to Hazael’s capital and destroyed its palm gardens, but was not able to conquer the city. Jehu of Israel, who had usurped the throne and was not ready for a fight, thought it wise to pay tribute. This fact is depicted on the famous Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser, which was found in Calah and is now in the British Museum. The Assyrian king reached the Mediterranean at the Dog River near Beirut, farther south than any of his predecessors. There he had his picture cut in relief on rock.

Shalmaneser III also gained some territory in the north and reached the sources of the Tigris, where he offered sacrifices. He did not, however, attack the strong kingdom of Urartu, which, under Sardur I, was determined to remain independent. Shalmaneser later entered Babylonian politics, upon an occasion when two brothers contested the throne. He allowed Babylonia to retain its independence, but exhibited Assyrian power to the people of Lower Mesopotamia by marching down to the Persian Gulf, on the way accepting tribute in gold, ivory, and elephant hides from the region to the south of Babylonia, including the important Aramaean state of Bit-Jakin. The fame and awe of Assyria had become so great that all gates were opened to the king. Very seldom was so great success gained with so little effort.

During the greater part of his reign, which lasted for more than 30 years, Shalmaneser enjoyed the faithful assistance of his commander in chief (turtan), Daian-ashur. During his last years, however, a serious revolt of the governors broke out and destroyed his lifework. From now on till his death in 824 B.C. he was scarcely able to maintain his position at Calah. The reasons for this revolt, led by one of Shalmaneser’s sons, are not clear, and lay either in the discontent with the old king’s decision concerning his successor or in his foreign or domestic policy.

Period of Imperial Dissolution (824—746 B.C.) - Although the power of the empire declined during the last years of Shalmaneser III, there was no complete breakup of authority over the conquered areas. The next king, Shamshi-Adad V (824-810 B.C.), succeeded, in three campaigns, in restoring Assyrian prestige, and in this he was supported by the Babylonian king Marduk-zakir-shum.

At this time begins a leaning toward Babylonia and its culture, which the Assyrians always unconsciously recognized as superior to their own. Shamshi-Adad took a Babylonian princess, Sammu-ramat, as wife and used the Babylonian language for royal inscriptions. Although he and his son both found it necessary

to conquer Babylonia repeatedly to punish acts of enmity, these two Assyrian kings never dared to incorporate, as a province, that famous land, considered the mother of Assyrian culture.

When Shamshi-Adad V died in 810 B.C., his son Adad-nirari III (810-782 B.C.) was too young for the kingship, and therefore his wife, Sammu-ramat, reigned a number of years for her son as regent. Her superior personality and the fact that she is the only woman ever to rule over Assyria made such a deep impression on her contemporaries and on later generations that under the name of Semiramis she became the central figure of numerous legends of antiquity that live on in Iraq to the present day. Several ancient works, such as aqueducts and monumental buildings, are attributed to her.

A strange religious revolution took place in the time of Adad-nirari III, which can be compared with that of the Egyptian Pharaoh Ikhnaton. For an unknown reason Nabu (Nebo), the god of Borsippa, seems to have been proclaimed sole god, or at least the principal god, of the empire. A Nabu temple was erected in 787 B.C. at Calah, and on a Nabu statue one of the governors dedicated to the king appear the significant words, "Trust in Nabu, do not trust in any other god" The favorite place accorded Nabu in the religious life of Assyria is revealed by the fact that no other god appears so often in personal names. This monotheistic revolution had as short a life as the Aton revolution in Egypt. The worshipers of the Assyrian national deities quickly recovered from their impotence, reoccupied their privileged places, and suppressed Nabu. This is the reason that so little is known concerning the events during the time of the monotheistic revolution. Biblical chronology places Jonah's ministry in the time of Jeroboam II, of Israel, who reigned from 793 to 753 B.C. Hence, Jonah's mission to Nineveh may have occurred in the reign of Adad-nirari III, and may have had something to do with his decision to abandon the old gods and serve only one deity. This explanation can, however, be given only as a possibility, because source material for that period is so scanty and fragmentary that a complete reconstruction of the political and religious history of Assyria during the time under consideration is not yet possible.

Adad-nirari III's successors conducted several military campaigns westward, but they were not able to suppress the subject nations permanently, nor to keep back the growing power of Urartu, which took over more and more areas formerly belonging to the Assyrian Empire. A revolt in Assur in 763 B.C., and the inactivity of some kings, brought Assyria to the point of collapse. If a strong ruler—Tiglath-pileser III—had not come to the throne, Assyria might have vanished from history more than a century earlier than it did.

The Formation of the New Assyrian Empire by Tiglath-pileser III (745—727 B.C.) - Tiglath-pileser III came into power as a usurper during a palace revolt at Calah in 746, but he did not actually take the throne until the second month in 745. That he chose for his ruling name that of a great former empire builder reveals his ambitions and plans. Like the great Tiglath-pileser I, he systematically and consistently pursued the plan to re-establish the Assyrian Empire.

The new king found himself face to face with three main problems of foreign policy which had to be solved in order to re-establish Assyrian power: (1) relations had to be clarified with Babylonia, which had fallen prey to the southern Aramaeans (Chaldeans); (2) Assyrian dominion over the Syro-Palestinian areas had to be re-established; (3) the power of Urartu, the great northern rival of Assyria, had to be curtailed. The way in which he solved these problems gives him the right to be called one of the greatest of Assyrian rulers.

The first task was a solution of the Babylonian question, which Tiglath-pileser carried out in two states. In the year of his accession, he went to Babylonia, defeated the Aramaean tribes that occupied great parts of the country, and deported them to other parts of his empire. The weak Babylonian king Nabonassar, whose power hardly reached beyond his city walls, was, for the time being, left unmolested. Two short-lived kings were tolerated on Babylon's throne after Nabonassar's death in 734 B.C., since Tiglath-pileser was engaged elsewhere and did not have time for Babylonia. As soon as he had his hands free, however, he set out to restore order to the chaotic political situation in Babylon, where Aramaean sheiks were the real rulers. He turned against them, decisively defeated them, and, in an act without precedent for an Assyrian king, "took the hands" of the god Marduk in token of accepting the kingship of Babylon—under the ruling name Pulu. Recognizing that Assyria would never be able to rule Babylonia, because of its own inferiority complex with respect to the superior Babylonian culture, he conceived a novel solution that consisted of uniting the two states as equals under the rulership of one king—who was thus monarch of both Assyria and Babylonia.

Tiglath-pileser's second task, the reconquest of Syria, was accomplished during the process of a number of military campaigns. He encountered strong opposition, especially at the cities of Arpad (now Tell Erfād), north of Aleppo, and Samal (now Zenjirli), whose conquest was time consuming and costly. Other city states surrendered only after bloody defeats. However, after three long campaigns the majority of the Syrian states once more belonged to the Assyrian Empire. Finally, Damascus and Israel were also defeated. The state of Damascus (Syria) was made into an Assyrian province, as were the northern and eastern parts of Israel and the coastal area of Palestine. Samaria, Israel's capital, was left with the southern part of the country as a semi-independent vassal state.

Hence, we read in the Bible and in royal Assyrian annals that Menahem, of Israel, paid tribute to Tiglath-pileser (Pul; 2 Kings 15:19), and of the replacement of Pekah by Hoshea. The king of Judah, who had sought Tiglath-pileser's help against Samaria and Damascus, and who went to Damascus to be received as Assyria's vassal (2 Kings 16:10), is also mentioned in the Assyrian records. It is therefore not astonishing that the first Assyrian king mentioned by name in the Bible is Tiglath-pileser. He appears there under his Assyrian as well as under his Babylonian name, Pul (2 Kings 16:7, 10; 2 Chronicles 28:20; 2 Kings 15:19; and 1 Chronicles 5:26, where the Hebrew text should be translated, "And the God of Israel stirred up the spirit of Pul king of Assyria, even the spirit of Tilgath-pileser king of Assyria").

Tiglath-pileser's third task was the subjugation of Urartu, which he began by conquering the states allied with its king, Sardur II. By overrunning the northern Mesopotamian and Syrian city states, much of Sardur's strength was broken. The decisive battle, however, was fought at Kummuh, west of the Euphrates, where Sardur was badly defeated but was able to escape to his capital Tushpa (now Toprakkale) at Lake Van. Although Tiglath-pileser's subsequent siege of Tushpa was unsuccessful, Urartu's power was broken, and the Assyrians occupied the greater part of Urartu, making of it the province Ulluba.

After each conquest, the Assyrian king transplanted the native populations to other parts of the empire. This policy resulted in a large-scale forced migration of peoples. Tiglath-pileser planned and succeeded in breaking the nationalistic spirit of the various nations, by tearing them away from their motherland and the soil they loved. This exchange of nations was intended to create an empire whose people would no longer consider themselves citizens of Urartu, Israel, Babylonia, or Damascus, but as citizens of Assyria.

This singularly successful king thus initiated a policy followed by his Assyrian successors and later by the Babylonians. This policy came to have a decisive effect on the later history of the Near East.

Shalmaneser V (727—722 B.C.) - Shalmaneser V, son of Tiglath-pileser, followed the policies of his father as closely as he could. Hence, as soon as he had come to the throne, he had himself crowned also as king of Babylon, where he bore the name Ululai. Unrest in the west forced him to turn his attention to Palestine soon after his accession to the throne, in order to keep that region within the empire. Hanno of Gaza, who had escaped to Egypt in Tiglath-pileser's time, on hearing of Shalmaneser's accession to the throne, returned and formed a coalition with Assyria's vassal prince, Hoshea of Israel, with a usurper in Hamath, and with the rulers of the cities of Arpad, Damascus, and Simyra. Trusting in the help of Egypt, these several princes refused the payment of tribute to Assyria, and Shalmaneser was obliged to restore his authority in the usual Assyrian way. Part of this campaign was directed against the semi-independent but politically unreliable state of Israel, which the king planned to annihilate. He besieged Samaria for three years inclusive, and probably took the city near the end of his reign.

Although Sargon II, the following king, claimed to have conquered Samaria, there is evidence that his claim is unjustified and that he attributed to himself what Shalmaneser V had accomplished near the close of his reign. As Shalmaneser's army commander, Sargon may, however, have played an important role in the conquest of Samaria. As had by now become a custom, he deported the remnant of the kingdom of Israel to northern Mesopotamia (Habor and Gozan), to the motherland of Assyria (Halah), and to Median cities in the north eastern provinces (2 Kings 18:11). On the other hand, Babylonians from Babylon and Cuthah, and Syrians from Hamath and Sepharvaim were transplanted to repopulate the land of Israel (2 Kings 17:24).

Sargon II (722-705 B.C.) - The new king was a usurper, and probably the murderer of his predecessor. Whatever the differences between Sargon and Shalmaneser may have been in domestic matters, in the field of external policies no change was contemplated or carried out, and Sargon closely followed the pattern set by Tiglath-pileser. His problems were similar to those of Tiglath-pileser's reign, with the difference that the former king had come to the throne at a time of national weakness and had built up an empire from practically nothing, while Sargon had only to hold what he inherited. Sargon did have one additional problem, however, that of meeting a threat of invasion from Indo-European tribes pushing southward through the Caucasus and eastward from Anatolia. King Mita of the Mushki, the Phrygian Midas of Greek writers, was his chief opponent. By inducing Carchemish to revolt, Mita forced a showdown with Sargon. This obliged the latter to take that famous city on the Euphrates (717 B.C.) and deport its population, which had until now kept Hittite culture alive and had made use of Hittite hieroglyphs in writing.

The Urartean kingdom under Rusa I was sorely pressed by the Cimmerians and the Medes, a welcome situation to Sargon in that it made that much easier the conquest of this traditional enemy country to the north. Sargon's Urartean campaign, carried out in his eighth year, is described in such detail on a famous tablet now in the Louvre in Paris that we are able to follow the royal army almost daily on its march and during its battles. While the conquest of Urartu and its subsequent weakness seemed to have advantages for the time being, the elimination of a strong northern buffer state had also undeniable disadvantages. It brought Assyria face to face with new barbaric tribes that a hundred years later were primarily responsible for the death of Assyria.

About that time Babylonia received an extremely able ruler in the person of Marduk-apal-iddina, the Merodach-baladan of the Bible (Isaiah 39:1). He was an Aramaean of Bit-Jakin, against whom Sargon was powerless as the result of a grievous defeat at the hands of the Elamites, who supported Marduk-apaliddina. For 12 years Sargon was compelled to campaign in the west and north before he felt strong enough to turn once more against Babylonia. In 709 B.C., however, he succeeded in driving Marduk-apal-iddina out of Babylonia and making himself its king, as his two predecessors on the throne of Assyria had done. One year later he destroyed Dur-Jakin near the Persian Gulf, seat of the Chaldean state of Bit-Jakin, and made Marduk-apal-iddina's home country an Assyrian province.

Sargon had little trouble in Palestine, which, with the exception of Ashdod, a coastal city of Philistia, remained quiet. In the hope of receiving Egyptian, Edomite, and Judean assistance, its ruler tried to shake off the Assyrian yoke. As Isaiah predicted, the revolt was unsuccessful and the city was taken by Sargon's turtan, "commander in chief" ("Tartan" in Isaiah 20:1). It may be mentioned in passing that Sargon's name was completely unknown from secular sources prior to the deciphering of cuneiform inscriptions, and that his very existence, and thus the accuracy of Isaiah, had been doubted by higher critics. However, Sargon's name was one of the first discovered in Assyrian records. This was the earliest discoveries concerning Assyria were made in Sargon's own capital Dur Sharrukin, now Khorsabad, where immense quantities of sculptures and inscribed royal records were brought to light.

Sargon's last years are wrapped in mystery. But on one of his eastern campaigns his army suffered a serious defeat, and he seems to have lost his life on that occasion.

Sennacherib (705—681 B.C.) - When Sennacherib came to the throne he was already trained in the art of ruling people, having been governor of the northern province of Amid during his father's reign. His character differed from that of Sargon II. He took a keen interest in the technical improvement of war equipment and in new building methods that made Nineveh the most glorious capital of the Assyrian period. In politics, he showed a severity that knew no compromise, a weakness that made it difficult to rule successfully over a great empire and to keep together what he had inherited. The two outstanding events of his life to impress the memory of later generations—his senseless destruction of Babylon and his unsuccessful siege of Jerusalem—are, in the light of history, both considered political failures.

When Sennacherib came to the throne, a revolt broke out among Syrian and Palestinian princes, who trusted in the help of Egypt. Sennacherib therefore marched to the west (701 B.C.) and was able to restore the former status in most places to which he came. When, after a long campaign, he finally camped at Lachish to make preparations for the siege of Jerusalem, he received tribute from Hezekiah of Judah, who in this way tried to appease the heartless king of Assyria. But Sennacherib would be satisfied with nothing less than the unconditional surrender of Jerusalem. The demand, however, was rejected by Hezekiah, and Sennacherib, whose presence was apparently required elsewhere, seems to have broken off the campaign. At least, he claims no more in his victory inscriptions than having shut Hezekiah in Jerusalem like a bird in a cage. He did not claim to have taken the city or its king. Judah was saved for the time being, and not threatened again until toward the end of Hezekiah's reign.

Hezekiah, encouraged by Sennacherib's failure to take Jerusalem in 701 B.C., continued to participate in anti-Assyrian coalitions, which eventually brought the Assyrian armies back to Judea. For this second campaign of Sennacherib, made after Taharka's accession to the throne of Egypt (690 B.C.), no cuneiform sources are available. A new demand for surrender made by the Assyrian king to Hezekiah was

rejected, with the encouragement and support of the prophet Isaiah. Although Isaiah had advised Hezekiah against participation in the coalition against Assyria, he was now, once the mistake had been made, on the side of the king and assured him that Sennacherib would “not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shields, nor cast a bank against it” (Isaiah 37:33). It was not an Egyptian army that saved Jerusalem upon this occasion, but a miracle. “Then the angel of the Lord went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses” (verse 36).

Even more troublesome than the west was Babylonia. Immediately after Sennacherib’s accession to the throne Marduk-apal-iddina returned from Elam, and with the help of the Elamite king Shutrup-nachunde occupied the throne of Babylon for almost a year. However, Sennacherib marched against Babylonia in 703 B.C., defeated Marduk-apal-iddina, and installed as ruler Bel-ibni, a native Babylonian who had been educated in Assyria.

Shortly after Sennacherib’s disastrous campaign in the west, Babylonia revolted again. Thereupon Sennacherib conducted another expedition against the Babylonians, in which great parts of the country were devastated. Taking Bel-ibni prisoner, Sennacherib made his own son, Ashur-nadin-shumi, king of Babylon. However, the Elamites took Babylon in 694 B.C. and put Nergal-ushezib on the throne, but this king was captured a year later by Sennacherib. After further upheavals, the Chaldean Mushezib-Marduk ascended the throne in 692 B.C., and, according to the Babylonian Chronicle, defeated the Assyrian army sent against him. However, Sennacherib now became so impatient at the continual state of unrest in Babylonia that he determined to eliminate it as a trouble spot from his empire. Hence, when he captured the city in 689 B.C., he did what none of his predecessors had dared to do—he destroyed the Babylonian metropolis thoroughly and systematically, throwing the debris of temples and palaces into the river, so forcing it to change its course. Minor gods were smashed and the major ones taken to Assyria. This deed the Babylonian neither forgave nor forgot, and for it they took a terrible revenge about 77 years later, when they destroyed Nineveh.

Sennacherib’s life was taken by his own sons, according to the Bible, the Babylonian Chronicle, and an inscription of Esarhaddon. Each of these records adds something to our fragmentary information on this heinous murder.

Esarhaddon (681—669 B.C.) - Esarhaddon, whose mother was an Aramaean, reversed his father’s anti-Babylonian policies upon coming to the throne. Apparently belonging to a party that favored Babylon, he started out to rebuild the ruined city, although the Marduk statue was not returned until Ashurbanipal’s reign. Once more, the power of Marduk over Assur was demonstrated to an astonished world.

With the conquest of Egypt of Esarhaddon the outward might of the Assyrian Empire reached its greatest height and remained so until its final decline began during the reign of Ashurbanipal. Esarhaddon’s first attempt to take Egypt in 673 B.C. was unsuccessful, and ended in defeat. But Taharka, an Ethiopian king of Egypt, surrendered two years later, and when Memphis fell almost without a battle the whole country lay open before the Assyrians, and the wealth of the Nile country streamed into Assyria. Esarhaddon installed 22 local princes as rulers over the country, and gave them Assyrian governors as supervisors. Returning from Egypt, the king had a relief of himself cut in the rocks at the Dog River near Beirut, where he found one left by his great predecessor, Shalmaneser III, and also had victory steles set up in several Syrian cities. One of these was found at Zenjirli, in which the king is shown leading the kings of

Tyre and Egypt by a cord as if they were wild animals. Heretofore no human being had ever possessed as great power as Esarhaddon. Neither Sargon of Agade (Akkad) nor Hammurabi had ruled over so many countries or peoples; but the signs of impending danger, already visible, troubled Esarhaddon. Barbaric nations such as the Scythians in the north west, the Cimmerians in eastern Asia Minor and Armenia, and the Medes in the east continued to gain strength. Anticipating trouble, Esarhaddon asked the sun-god whether these people would be successful or whether they could be kept back. Trying to remove one evil through another, he concluded a treaty with the Scythians against the Cimmerians and Medes and gave his daughter to the Scythian chieftain Bartatua, whom Herodotus calls Protothyas.

In 672 B.C., Ashurbanipal was proclaimed crown prince of Assyria, and became virtually coregent with his father. Two years later, Shamash-shum-ukin, the older son of Esarhaddon, received the same dignity with respect to Babylon.

Esarhaddon's reign ended under a cloud. Egypt revolted, when Taharka of Ethiopia once more appeared on the scene, making it necessary for Esarhaddon to set out for the Nile to punish the rebels and restore order. He died in 669 B.C. on his way to Egypt.

Ashurbanipal (669—627? B.C.) - Led now by Esarhaddon's turtan, Sha-Nabu-shu, the Egyptian campaign was brought to a successful end. Necho, one of the rebellious princes who was brought to Nineveh as captive to receive punishment won the king's favor and was sent back to Egypt as an Assyrian vassal. His son Psamtik took the Assyrian name Nabu-shezibanni. Another attempt was made to liberate Egypt from the Assyrian yoke, by Taharka's successor Tanutamon, but it was likewise unsuccessful. Ashurbanipal took Thebes and thoroughly destroyed that beautiful city. A few years later Psamtik was able to shake off the Assyrian yoke and to restore Egypt's independence. To hold Egypt in subjection proved to be so costly for Assyria at a time when it needed all its reserves to meet dangers from the west, north, and east that the Nile country had to be given up.

Ashurbanipal also had trouble in Babylon, where his own brother Shamash-shum-ukin revolted. The revolt failed, however, Babylon was taken, and Shamash-shum-ukin died in the flames of his palace. Ashurbanipal then crowned himself king of Babylon. He also waged several successful wars against Elam, which had supported Shamash-shum-ukin, and against Arabia, Syria, and Palestine. He was thus able to keep his shaky empire together. He even had the rare satisfaction of seeing most of his enemies perish before he left the scene of action. Gyges of Lydia, who had supported Psamtik in his revolt, lost throne and life in his war with the Cimmerians. Another rebel, the Chaldean prince Nabu-bel-shumati, committed suicide in order not to fall into Ashurbanipal's hands, and in Elam, a number of minor kings lost their lives in the several wars with Assyria that finally crushed the proud kingdom of Elam and leveled its capital city, Susa.

The passing glory of Assyria and the wealth that poured into the royal coffers could not hide the fact that the days of that proud empire were numbered. So long as a strong man held the reins of government in his hands the coming catastrophe was postponed, but a careful observer could already see that a different situation would arise whenever a weak ruler should come to the throne.

Ashurbanipal is especially well known as the collector of many books and the founder of the great library of Nineveh, which was discovered in the ruins of Nineveh in the middle of the 19th century. From this library, now in the British Museum, was derived much of our early information concerning Assyrian and

Babylonian history and religion. Later other great cuneiform collections found in the ruined sites of Mesopotamia have provided additional valuable information. As a prince, originally destined to become a priest, he received a careful scholarly and priestly training, and for this reason took an interest in collecting the literary wealth of his time. He preserved for later ages copies of many valuable texts, the originals of which have long since disappeared.

The circumstances and date of his death are unknown. The year 626 B.C. was formerly given as the year of his death, and some thought that it was 631. Others say probably about 627. But since no Eponym Canon for his last years is known, the chronology of this period is somewhat uncertain.

The End of the Assyrian Empire - Ashur-etil-ilani, a younger son of Ashurbanipal who owed his throne to Sin-shum-lishir, one of his father's generals, ruled for the next five years or so. The new king held southern Babylonia, but could not prevent Nabopolassar, a Chaldean army commander, from taking Babylon and making himself king. Although he thus lost Babylon permanently, Ashur-etil-ilani had a happier experience in his fight against the Medes, whose king, Phraortes, fell in battle. It is uncertain how and in what year Ashur-etil-ilani was succeeded by Sin-shar-ishkun, generally held to be his brother. (Some scholars even consider the two names as belonging to one king.)

Sin-shar-ishkun seems to have enjoyed a measure of success for a time. He campaigned against Babylonia, and even conquered Sippar. Also, the Medes under Phraortes' son Cyaxares were beaten. It is a curious fact that now, having lost its former strength, Assyria received help from former enemies such as the Scythians and Egyptians, who feared that its fall might give birth to other powers even more dangerous than Assyria had been.

Realizing Assyria's weakness, and following the principle that attack is the best defense, Nabopolassar of Babylon went on the offensive soon after he had become an independent king. He had some military successes, but also several setbacks, as revealed in the Babylonian Chronicle that covers his first three regnal years. Lack of extant records leaves us in the dark about his successes and defeats during the next seven years. In 616 B.C., the year for which chronicles are again available, Nabopolassar was on the offensive and conquered Assyrian and Aramaean towns on the middle Euphrates, but proved unable to withstand an Assyro-Egyptian army, which drove him back to Babylon. The following year Nabopolassar made an unsuccessful attempt to take the old city of Assur. This campaign also failed. He was not yet strong enough to defeat Assyria single handed. However, the Medes captured Tarbisu and Assur in 614 B.C. and the Median king Cyaxares concluded an alliance with Nabopolassar that was sealed by the marriage of the Babylonian crown prince Nebuchadnezzar to a Median princess. This political alliance decided the fate of Assyria, and after a siege of three months Nineveh fell to the united Medes and Babylonians, in 612 B.C. Sin-shar-ishkun died with his family in the flames of his palace. Like Calah, Nineveh was destroyed so thoroughly that later generations did not even know of its location. The empire of Assyria was divided between Cyaxares and Nabopolassar, the former taking all the northern provinces, along with Assyria's claims to Asia Minor, and the latter receiving nominal control of Mesopotamia, Syria, and Palestine. Actual control, however, could be won only through a show of power, and not simply by an understanding between the two victors.

With Egyptian help, an Assyrian prince by the name of Ashur-uballit essayed to re-establish the Assyrian state, with Haran as its capital, but was soon evicted by the Medes and Chaldeans. Assyria, the scourge of the nations for many centuries, ceased to exist, and its citizens experienced the same cruel treatment their

rulers had meted out to many other peoples in the past. The words of Nahum, like those of other Hebrew prophets who had predicted the fall of the Assyrian Empire, were literally fulfilled:

“O king of Assyria:
thy nobles shall dwell in the dust:
thy people is scattered upon the mountains,
and no man gathereth them.
There is no healing of thy bruise;
thy wound is grievous” (Nahum 3:18, 19).

Phoenicia From the Earliest Times to Nebuchadnezzar II

Phoenicia, though not mentioned under this name in the Old Testament, had many contacts with the Hebrews, and the history of this country is of some importance to the student of the Bible, who finds frequent mention of Phoenician cities such as Tyre, Sidon, Zarephath (Sarepta), Gebal (Byblos), and Arvad (Aradus).

The land of Phoenicia covered the narrow coastal strip of Syria north of the Bay of Acre and between the Lebanon mountain range and the Mediterranean, which consists of a number of small plains where the mountains recede from the sea, each of which was dominated by a maritime city. The coastal plain varies in width from 1/2 mile to 3 miles (.8 to 4.8 km.). In some places, as at the Nahr el-Kelb, the Dog river north of Beirut, the mountains drop precipitously to the sea, so that the road must be blasted out of the rocks. Anciently, the cities were built either on rocky islands off the coast—like Tyre and Arvad—or on the shore where land jutting out into the sea forms small bays in what is, for the most part, a straight coast line—as with Tripoli and Byblos. The country was well watered by a number of rivers from the Lebanon Mts., which in ancient times were heavily forested with cedars and other coniferous trees. Phoenicia was rich in grain, fruit, and wine, and as the principal exporter of cedarwood from the mountains and the products of the Syrian hinterland, it became the commercial clearing house of the ancient world.

The Greek name for the land, Phoenicia, is related to one of its principal exports, a purple-colored dye material called phoinix, “purple,” or “crimson.” However, they called themselves Kena‘ani, that is, Canaanites, and their country Canaan, which agrees with Genesis 10:15-19, where the inhabitants of several Phoenician cities are listed as descendants of Canaan.

There is not sufficient source material available for a complete history of Phoenicia, and its earliest history is completely shrouded in obscurity. One of the Phoenician cities, however—Byblos—appears in Egyptian records of the third millennium as an important city for the export of cedarwood. Excavations carried out in Byblos have shown strong Egyptian influence during the time of the Old (Egyptian) Kingdom. The later Tyrians claimed a tradition that their city had been founded about 2750 B.C., and the Sidonians claimed an even greater age for their city. The earliest mention of these important port cities of southern Phoenicia is found in the records of the Eighteenth Dynasty of Egypt, when all of Phoenicia was dominated by the rulers of the Nile valley. However, the fact that the Phoenicians had to pay tribute to Egypt and tolerate Egyptian garrisons in their cities did not materially affect their economic strength. Their foreign trade seems to have flourished, and their agents were found in Cyprus, on the coasts of Asia Minor, and in the Aegean Sea. Toward the end of the second millennium, they extended their economic

sphere of influence and sent ships to Sicily, Sardinia, North Africa, and Spain. Later, permanent colonies were founded in distant lands. Of these colonies, Carthage became the most famous. It grew so strong, in fact, that in course of time it dared to challenge the expansionism of Rome. Tartessus, in Spain, the westernmost point of Phoenician influence, was one of several places named “Tarshish,” or “smeltery,” to which sailed “ships of Tarshish” (Psalms 48:7; see on 1 Kings 10:22).

Until the close of the second millennium B.C., Sidon had held the most important place among the Phoenician port cities, but during the first millennium Tyre took the lead and kept it for many centuries. It seems that Phoenicia never developed a unified government controlling the whole country, but that each large city had its own ruler and that its control extended to smaller communities adjacent to it.

A number of rulers of Byblos are known from inscriptions found during the excavations of that city, but after the middle of the second millennium B.C., the political role of Byblos seems to have been at most a minor one. Hiram was the first ruler of Tyre whose name is known. He was contemporary with David and Solomon and assisted in the building of the Temple at Jerusalem. Also, his sailors participated with those of Solomon in expeditions to Ophir.

One of Hiram’s later successors was Ethbaal, father of Ahab’s infamous wife, Jezebel. He had been a priest of Astarte before becoming king of Tyre, which may explain his daughter’s zeal for the religion of her native land, even when she became queen of Israel. During Ethbaal’s reign the struggle with Assyria began in earnest, that country which from the 9th century B.C. onward sought to subjugate piecemeal all lands to the west. Hence, at the battle of Qarqar in 853, we find the king of the Phoenician city of Arvad, with 200 soldiers, in the coalition against Shalmaneser III. However, most of the other Phoenician cities agreed to pay tribute. Thus for a time they maintained comparative independence and continued their lucrative overseas trade unmolested.

An important episode in Phoenician history was the fight of Tyre against Shalmaneser V and Sargon II in the time of king Hezekiah of Judah. Tyre was besieged for five years and sorely hurt. It seems that the city was finally forced to surrender and once more made tributary. But Tyre rebelled again in Sennacherib’s time, and was unsuccessfully besieged. Yet, when Sidon followed Tyre’s example and rebelled against Esarhaddon, it was taken and destroyed (678 B.C.). Tyre remained independent a few years longer, but was finally forced back into the Assyrian fold by Ashurbanipal.

When the tottering Assyrian Empire was replaced by the Neo-Babylonian, Tyre took advantage of the political difficulties of the transitional period, declared itself independent, and refused to send tribute to Babylonia. As a result, Nebuchadnezzar moved against the city. He took mainland Tyre but besieged the island city for 13 years without success. He allowed the king to remain on the throne, but appointed a Babylonian high commissioner to safeguard Babylonian interests.

The Syrian States

The name Syria is a geographical term designating an area that has varied in size from time to time. Present-day Syria does not include everything known as Syria in ancient times, and extends to areas that had never before been considered a part of it. In Roman times all the land from the Euphrates in the north to the Red Sea in the south was designated as Syria. At other times Palestine was thought of separately,

and parts of northern and central Mesopotamia were included. Generally speaking, however, the geographical term Syria designates an area bordered on the east by the great Syrian Desert, in the west by the Mediterranean, in the north by the Taurus Mts., and in the south by Palestine, with the line between Syria and Palestine running approximately straight from the sea north of Acre to the Jordan north of the now-drained Lake Huleh.

The region thus marked out is intersected by two north-south mountain ranges. The western range is marked in the north by the Jebel Akra (5,241 ft.; 1,597 m.) and in the south by the Lebanon, which rises to more than 10,000 ft. (3,048 metres). The eastern range of mountains, called the Anti-Lebanon, ends in the south with Mt. Hermon (9,232 ft., or 2,814 metres). Between the two ranges lies a 12-mi.-wide (19.3 km.) highland valley, now called Beqa', "the split," with its two rivers, the Litani, flowing south, and the Orontes, north. Both rivers eventually turn west and empty their waters into the Mediterranean. Several streams flow eastward from the Anti-Lebanon range and irrigate various oases of the Syrian Desert, of which Damascus, with its surrounding garden area, is the richest and largest.

Since the coastal region of Phoenicia was isolated by mountains from the rest of Syria, it experienced a history somewhat different from that of the hinterland, and has been treated separately in the preceding section. Thus, politically, Syria consisted essentially of city states that flourished around oases such as those of Damascus and Aleppo and others such as Kadesh, Qatna, Hamath, or Alalakh (Tell 'Atshânah) on the banks of inland rivers. The latter all lay in close proximity along the Orontes. The typical Syrian culture of later times is also found in Upper Mesopotamia, in the area which in the second millennium was known as the kingdom of Mitanni.

As in the case of Phoenicia, little is known of the history of this area prior to the middle of the second millennium. Egyptian and Babylonian texts of the first half of that millennium B.C., however, occasionally mention the rulers of the cities of Syria, and from their names, we learn that they were Amorites, as were most of the rulers of Western Asia from 2200-1500 B.C. The Hyksos, who swept down to Egypt in the 18th century, passed through Syria on their way to the Nile valley and took possession of certain important cities, for instance Qatna, fortifying them in typical Hyksos manner with massive earth ramparts.

In the 16th century all Syria was conquered by Thutmose III and remained under Egyptian control for almost a century. However, during the reign of Amenhotep III and Ikhnaton, some of the subject native rulers took advantage of Egypt's weakness and made themselves independent. The strongest of these rebellious states was Amurru, of which we learn much from the Amarna Letters and the Hittite records of the period. During the time of the Nineteenth Dynasty a new rival for the possession of Syria arose, the Hittites, with the result that Syria frequently became a battlefield where the two opposing powers met. With the appearance of the Peoples of the Sea toward the end of the 13th century B.C., the Hittites vanished from history as a nation, but their remnants retained possession of some Syrian cities such as Hamath and Carchemish, and preserved Hittite culture for several centuries more.

At that time the Aramaeans, who had lived in the plains of northern Mesopotamia for many centuries, moved south and either founded or took over a number of strong city states, of which Damascus and Zobah (north of Damascus) became the most powerful. It is for this reason that, from the time of David, these two states are frequently mentioned in contemporary Biblical records. David was able to hold them in subjection, but they regained their independence either during the reign of Solomon or immediately

after his death. From that time on the Syrian states were enemies of the kingdom of Israel, with the result that Israel fought numerous wars against the Syrians, especially against Damascus.

From the 9th century onward, the Syrian states shared the fate of other nations of Western Asia, upon whom the kings of Assyria cast greedy eyes. For two centuries one Assyrian campaign after another was directed against one or more of these Aramaean states of Syria, to ensure a constant flow of tribute, until Tiglath-pileser III inaugurated the policy of transplanting conquered nations to remote districts of the empire in the effort to replace national consciousness with loyalty to the Assyrian Empire. Hence, one Syrian city state after another vanished under the relentless onslaught of the Assyrian war machine. Finally, in 732 B.C. as one of the last, Damascus fell and became a province of Assyria.

The fall of Damascus marked the disappearance of the characteristics Syrian culture from that area, which, in a somewhat changed form, was perpetuated for a time as a world culture. The Aramaic language spread with the dispersion of Syria's population, and within two centuries after the fall of Damascus became a medium of communication, spoken or at least understood, from the southern border of Egypt throughout the lands of the Fertile Crescent and Persia, and even as far as the western border of India. Although the Syrians had never constituted a political unit, and had never been able to extend their control over extensive parts of the world, their language conquered the world in somewhat the same way as Greek did some centuries later.

The United Kingdom of Israel (1050-931 B.C.)

Previous sections of this chapter have covered the history of Egypt and Mesopotamia to the 7th century B.C. This section deals with the 120 years of Israel's history under its first three kings, each of whom ruled approximately 40 years (2 Samuel 5:4; 1 Kings 11:42; Acts 13:21).

Since their invasion of Canaan, the Hebrews had slowly grown in strength and taken root through continual struggle with the nations living in and around Palestine. They had lived in the land for about three and a half centuries when they felt the need of a unified government. Hitherto they had been guided by Spirit-led men called judges, without assurance that competent leadership would continue after the death of each judge. From a strictly human, political point of view, the popular desire for a hereditary kingship expressed in the time of Samuel (1 Samuel 8:5) was only natural. If Israel was to achieve its aim, it must remain in permanent possession of the country; and in order to do so it needed unity, continuity of leadership, and stable government. This eventuality had been foreseen by Moses, who laid down the principles according to which kings should rule (Deuteronomy 17:14-20).

While under Saul the kingdom remained weak, owing to the young king's inexperience and immaturity of character, under David, an indefatigable warrior and an able politician, it was built up into a formidable empire. It was not comparable with the empires on the Nile and the Euphrates, but was nevertheless impressive, controlling as it did most of the nations of Palestine and Syria. Built by David's genius under the blessing of God, assisted by the weakness of the other great nations of his time, the empire of Israel remained intact for about half a century. Weaknesses became apparent even under Solomon's generally peaceful rule, and his kingdom broke to pieces when death removed his strong hand.

Of permanent value, however, aside from the memory of a glorious past under two great kings, was the establishment of Jerusalem as a religious and political center for the nation. Its very name, “city of peace,” has exerted a magic influence on the minds of Hebrew people of all generations. Inasmuch as promises of the coming of Messiah were connected by Inspiration with the royal house of David, the idea of a God-appointed and God-guided kingship was never lost sight of.

Saul (1050-1011 B.C.) - Saul, the son of the Benjamite, Kish, a man chosen by God for his deeply religious nature (1 Samuel 10:7, 10, 11; 14:37), his humility (1 Samuel 10:22), and a tendency to be generous (1 Samuel 11:13), was first secretly anointed by Samuel (1 Samuel 10:1), proclaimed king at Mizpeh (1 Samuel 10:17-24), and confirmed in office at Gilgal after his successful rescue of Jabesh-gilead from the Ammonites (1 Samuel 11). His kingdom consisted of a rather loose union of tribes, who followed him as king in times of emergency, but who otherwise decided their own affairs without interference from a central government. Early in his reign, his office differed little from that of a judge. Among other things, he still took care of his own cattle, even after he had been proclaimed king.

Nevertheless, the idea of a real kingship was gradually developing. Saul planned that his kingship should be hereditary. He erected a castle on the site of his capital, “Gibeah of Saul,” now Tell el-Fûl, 4 miles (6.4 km.) north of Jerusalem. His two-story citadel, measuring 170 by 114 ft. (51.8 by 34.7 metres), with outer walls 6 to 7 ft. (1.8 to 2.1 metres) thick, has been excavated by W. F. Albright. With its fortified walls and corner towers, it represents typical Hebrew construction of the time. The largest hall, probably the audience chamber where David played his lyre before the king, was 7 by 25 ft. (2.1 by 7.6 metres)

Furthermore, Saul created the first, though small, standing army maintained by Israel. It consisted of 3,000 men, situated in 3 garrison cities (1 Samuel 13:2), with his uncle, or perhaps cousin, Abner, as commander in chief (1 Samuel 14:50).

On the throne during the difficult period when the Philistines, by virtue of their superior weapons and military experience, tried to subjugate the Hebrews, the new king often found himself fighting against them, as well as against other nations. The first proof of his generalship was given in his rescue of the Transjordan city of Jabesh-gilead from the Ammonites (1 Samuel 11:1-11). Successful wars were also fought against the Amalekites (1 Samuel 15:4-8) and the Edomites in the south, the Moabites in the east, and the Aramaeans of the Syrian state of Zobah (1 Samuel 14:47).

The lifelong threat to Israel’s existence, however, came from Philistia (1 Samuel 14:52), which maintained garrisons in various Hebrew cities, even in some close to Saul’s capital. The Philistines had a monopoly on the manufacture and sharpening of weapons and tools, so that at one time in all Israel only Saul and Jonathan possessed iron weapons (1 Samuel 13:19-22). They terrorized the Hebrews so much that the latter were habitually forced to seek refuge in caves and inaccessible mountain retreats (verse 6).

The first great Israelite victory over the Philistines, one that resulted in their expulsion from the eastern hill country, was more a military episode than a real battle. When the Philistines had occupied the hills of Benjamin and taken Michmash, the Israelites retreated in disorder (verses 5-11). Michmash lies 7 miles (11.5 km.) north of Jerusalem at an altitude of about 2,000 ft. (610 metres), overlooking the deep gorge of the Wadi eş-Şuwenîţ to the south, which formed the pass of Michmash. While Saul was camped with 600 men at Geba, separated from the Philistines by the Wadi eş-Şuwenîţ, Jonathan and his armor-bearer climbed down the Rock Seneh on which Geba was built, crossed the wadi, and then climbed the steep

Rock Bozez, on which the Philistines were encamped at Michmash (1 Samuel 13:15, 23; 14:4, 5). In the Philistine camp Jonathan's surprise attack created confusion which was increased by the Hebrews who came to Jonathan's aid, with the result that the Philistines fled in panic (1 Samuel 14:11-23).

The first major encounter between the Hebrews and the Philistines during Saul's reign took place in the western hill country between Shochoh and Azekah, about halfway between Jerusalem and Ashkelon. David's victory over Goliath on this occasion marked the beginning of a great series of victories over the hated Philistines. The chief results were increased liberty for the Hebrews and considerable wealth realized from the loot of the Philistines (1 Samuel 17).

Unfortunately, for the nation and the royal house, Saul possessed an undisciplined character that became overbearing as a result of his successes. Because of his violation of the Levitical law and of divine orders he lost both the kingship and his own sanity. His last years—we know not how many—were spent under the shadow of insanity, which in turn led to the persistent attempt to kill David, who he knew was destined to be his successor. Having lost the friendship and guiding hand of his old counselor Samuel (1 Samuel 15:17-23, 35), he committed some of the most foolish and atrocious crimes, such as slaughtering the innocent priests of Nob (1 Samuel 22:11-21) and attempting to kill his own son Jonathan (1 Samuel 20:30-33). Known for his zeal in uprooting spiritism, he finally appealed to a witch for counsel the day before his death (1 Samuel 28:3-25).

At a battle fought in the mountains of Gilboa, at the eastern end of the plain of Esdraelon, Saul and his sons lost their lives fighting against the Philistines (1 Samuel 31:1-6). This battle was so disastrous that all the gains of Saul's long reign were lost to the Philistines, who once more occupied the cities of Israel and drove the panic-stricken inhabitants to their former mountain retreats (verse 7).

David (1011-971 B.C.) - After Saul's death, David was crowned king over Judah at Hebron (2 Samuel 2:3, 4). He had in times past been a captain in Saul's army, and was at one time Saul's son-in-law (1 Samuel 18:27), but had lived as an outcast in the forests and mountain caves of southern Judah, and in a Philistine city during the last years of Saul's reign (1 Samuel 19 to 29). David, who had been anointed secretly by the prophet Samuel soon after Saul's rejection as king, was exceptionally gifted as a warrior, poet, and musician (1 Samuel 17; 2 Samuel 1:17-27; 1 Samuel 16:14-23). He was also deeply religious, and although he fell into gross sin, he knew how to repent and regain divine favor (see Psalms 51). Hence, kingship was confirmed in perpetuity to him and his posterity, to culminate in the eternal kingship of the Messiah, who was a descendant of David after the flesh (Romans 1:3).

The first seven years of David's reign were confined to Judah, while Ish-bosheth, Saul's fourth son, ruled over the remainder of the tribes from his capital, Mahanaim, in Transjordan. Relations between the two rival kings were bitter, and exploded in strife and bloodshed (2 Samuel 2:12-32). Saul's army commander, Abner, was the real power behind the throne of Ish-bosheth, a weakling who fell victim to assassins immediately after the withdrawal of Abner's support (2 Samuel 3 and 4). His real name seems to have been Esh-baal, "man of Baal" (1 Chronicles 8:33; 9:39), which suggests that when he was born Saul had departed so far from God that he worshiped Baal. For the inspired writer of 2 Samuel this name was so shameful that he never used it, consistently choosing, rather, to call Esh-baal, "man of Baal," Ish-bosheth, "man of shame."

David had made Hebron his capital and was there crowned king over all Israel after Ish-bosheth's death, which marked the end of Saul's brief dynasty. After David had reigned for seven and a half years, he set out to establish a new capital. He demonstrated remarkable political wisdom by selecting as a capital a city that had thus far belonged to no tribe, and hence would be acceptable to all. By conquering the Jebusite fortress of Jerusalem, on the border between Judah and Benjamin, and by establishing the political and religious center of the kingdom in a central location, yet off the main international highways running through the country, David showed commendable political foresight. Ever since that time, Jerusalem has been an important city, and has played a distinctive role in the history of the world.

David's reign is distinguished by an unbroken chain of military victories. He defeated the Philistines repeatedly (2 Samuel 5:17-25; 21:15-22; 23:13-17) and was able to free Israel completely from their influence. He limited them to the coastal area surrounding the cities of Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Gath, and Ekron. He also subjugated the Moabites, Ammonites, and Edomites (2 Samuel 8:2, 14; 10:6 to 11:1; 12:26-31; 1 Chronicles 18:2, 11-13; 19:1 to 20:3), and made the Aramaeans of Damascus and Zobah tributary (2 Samuel 8:3-13; 1 Chronicles 18:5-10). Other nations sought his friendship by sending gifts—such as the king of Hamath (2 Samuel 8:9, 10)—or by signing treaties—such as the Phoenician king of Tyre (2 Samuel 5:11). In this way, David was able to rule over all western and eastern Palestine, with the exception of the coastal region, and indirectly over great parts of Syria as well. Practically all the territory between the Euphrates and Egypt either was administered by David's governors or was friendly or tributary to him.

David's domestic policies were not always so successful as his foreign policies. For tax purposes or for an assessment of the potential manpower of his kingdom, he had a census taken that Joab, his general—as well as God—resented (2 Samuel 24; 1 Chronicles 21 and 22). David, as some other strong political rulers before and after him, also occasionally fell victim to his lusts—see for example the Bathsheba episode (2 Samuel 11:2 to 12:25)—and as a polygamist shared the unfortunate results of this custom. One of his sons committed incest (2 Samuel 13), another, Absalom, became a fratricide and later revolted against his own father but died in the ensuing battle (2 Samuel 13 to 19). The rebellion of the Benjamite Sheba also caused serious trouble and bloodshed (2 Samuel 20); and shortly before David's death Adonijah, one of his sons, made an unsuccessful attempt to gain the throne by a palace revolution (1 Kings 1). The strong personality of David, together with the unflinching support of those who were loyal to him, managed to overcome all divisive forces. The kingdom was transferred to Solomon as a strong unit.

David's fundamental loyalty to God and his willingness to repent and accept punishment for sin gained for him the respect of the prophets Nathan and Gad, and brought divine promises and blessings of a singular nature. One of his great desires, to build a temple to the God he loved, was not realized. However, he was promised that his son, whose hands were not bloodstained as his were, would build the Temple. Hence, David bought the land for it, had a design made, and collected the funds, by way of assisting Solomon in carrying out the plan (2 Samuel 7; 1 Chronicles 21:18 to 22:5).

Solomon (971-931 B.C.) - Solomon, the third ruler of the united kingdom of Israel, whose name was also Jedidiah, "beloved of Jehovah" (2 Samuel 12:24, 25, seems to have followed the Oriental custom of taking a throne name, Solomon, "peaceable." His reign made this title not only appropriate but popular.

For reasons not stated God chose Solomon to be David's successor and David proclaimed him king during the course of a palace revolution aimed at placing his older son Adonijah on the throne (1 Kings

1:15-49). Although Solomon at first seemed to show clemency toward Adonijah, he did not forget the incident. Usually the slightest mistake Solomon's opponents made cost them their lives. Hence, Joab, instigator of the plot, and Adonijah were both eventually executed, while Abiathar, the high priest, was deposed (1 Kings 2).

Demonstrating unusual piety in early life, Solomon asked God for wisdom in the difficult task of ruling the new empire, the extent of whose political problems he seemed to realize. His wisdom, of which examples occur in Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Canticles, exceeded that of all other famous sages of antiquity (1 Kings 3:4 to 4:34). This fame attracted intellectuals of various nations to Solomon's court, of whose visits that of the Arabian queen of Sheba seems to have made the greatest impression on contemporaries (1 Kings 4:34; 10:1-10).

The kingdom Solomon inherited from his father extended from the Gulf of Aqabah in the south almost to the Euphrates in the north. Never before or after was Israelite territory so extensive. Since Assyria and Egypt were both very weak at this time, Solomon met no real opposition from his neighbors; and taking advantage of this situation, he ventured forth on great trading enterprises by land and sea that brought him wealth never before seen by his people. Hence, the splendor of his reign became legendary, as Matthew 6:28, 29 testifies.

Since the Phoenicians already controlled Mediterranean trade, Solomon turned southward and developed commercial enterprises with Arabia and East Africa, carrying out his maritime expeditions with the help of Tyrian sailors (1 Kings 9:26-28). The city of Ezion-geber at the head of the Gulf of Aqabah served not only as home port for these expeditions but also, apparently, as a commercial center for copper mined in the Wadi Arabah (the area between the Dead Sea and Ezion-geber). Since Solomon also controlled numerous overland trading routes, Israel became the great clearing house for Egyptian chariots and linen, Cilician horses, and the various products of Arabia. Practically nothing entered Egypt from the east, or Mesopotamia from the south west, without enriching Solomon's coffers (1 Kings 4:21; 10:28, 29).

The king was also engaged in vast building enterprises. On Mt. Moriah, north of old Jerusalem, he built an acropolis comprising the magnificent Temple, erected in 7 years (1 Kings 6:37, 38), and his own palace, which was 13 years in building (1 Kings 7:1). He also built the millo', or "filling," thought by some to have been between Zion and Moriah, and repaired the wall of Jerusalem (1 Kings 9:15, 24). A chain of chariot cities was built throughout the country to guarantee its safety, and this required a large standing army and many horses and chariots—both costly items in the national budget (1 Kings 4:26; 9:15-19; 2 Chronicles 9:28). Excavations at Gezer and Megiddo have thrown light on these Biblical records.

For his manifold enterprises the king depended on forced labor (1 Kings 5:13-18; 9:19-23), and on Phoenicians for skilled workmen and mariners (1 Kings 7:13; 9:27). The magnificent building projects and the vast requirements of the army put such a strain on Israelite economy that even Solomon's immense revenue proved insufficient to finance the program, with the result that at one time he had to cede 20 Galilean towns to Phoenicia in payment for needed timber and gold (1 Kings 9:10-14).

Following the custom of Oriental monarchs, Solomon had a large harem, and attempted to foster international good will by marrying princesses from most of the surrounding nations, including the Egyptians, and by permitting shrines dedicated to foreign deities (1 Kings 11:1-8 to be built in Jerusalem.

The Egyptian princess, who brought as her dowry the city of Gezer, which her father had conquered from the Canaanites, seems to have been his favored queen inasmuch as he built her a separate palace (1 Kings 3:1; 9:16, 24).

But the outward glory of the kingdom, the sumptuous court ceremonial, the strong new fortresses throughout the country, the powerful army, and the great trading enterprises could not hide the evident fact that Solomon's empire was ready to fall apart. There was unrest among the Israelites, because of high taxes and forced labor requirements, and among the subjugated nations, which were only waiting for a sign of weakness to break loose from Jerusalem. Although only three rebels are mentioned by name in the Bible, Hadad the Edomite, Rezon the son of Eliadah, and the Ephraimite Jeroboam (1 Kings 11:14-40), who came out openly in opposition to Solomon, events that occurred immediately upon Solomon's death imply that there must have been considerable unrest even during his lifetime.

Bible writers, who were more concerned with the religious life of their heroes, give as the main reason for the decline of Solomon's power and the breakup of his empire, the king's departure from the straight path of religious duty. Although he had built the Temple of Jehovah and at its dedication offered a prayer that reflected deep spiritual experience (1 Kings 8:22-61), he nevertheless fell into unprecedented polygamy and idolatry (1 Kings 11:9-11) that led to the adoption of foolish policies and so hastened the fall of his kingdom.

No sooner had Solomon closed his eyes than the tribes of Israel broke into two factions and several of the subject nations proclaimed their independence.

The Kingdom of Judah 931—609 B.C. and of Israel 931—722 B.C.

The Kings of Judah; Rehoboam (931-913 B.C.) - With Rehoboam, Solomon's rash son, the united Hebrew kingdom came to a close, never to be revived. When Rehoboam went to Shechem for the coronation, he learned of deep-seated grievances among his subjects over the excessive tax burdens and the forced labor his father had introduced. Rejecting the advice of experienced counselors to accede to the reasonable demands of the people, he threatened to increase their burdens and thereby provoked an open revolt of his northern and eastern subjects under the leadership of Jeroboam, who, on hearing of Solomon's death, had returned from exile (1 Kings 12:1-20).

Although he heeded the counsel of the prophet Shemaiah, not to fight his brothers at the time of the separation of the ten tribes, Rehoboam apparently fought several bloody wars with Jeroboam at a later time (1 Kings 12:24; 14:30). Also, in his fifth year he experienced the historic attack of Sheshonk (Shishak) I of Egypt (1 Kings 14:25-28), concerning which Sheshonk's victory relief on the temple wall at Karnak still bears witness. This attack may account for the fact that the king of Judah strengthened the fortifications of a number of towns which guarded the roads leading to Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 11:5-12).

Being, probably, the son of an Ammonite woman, Rehoboam followed his father in having a large harem and in promoting the worship of pagan gods, with all their abominable rites (1 Kings 14:22-24; 2 Chronicles 11:21).

TENTATIVE CHRONOLOGY OF THE DIVIDED KINGDOMS OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH

Egypt		Judah		Israel		Assyria	
Libyan Dynasties 950-750		(Saul, 1050-1011, David, 1011-971, Solomon, 971-931)					
Twenty-second Dynasty		Rehoboam	931-913	Jeroboam I	931-910	Ashur-dan II	933-910
		Abijam	913-911				
Sheshonk I							
		Asa	911-869	Nadab	910-909	Adad-nirari II	910-889
Osorkon I				Baasha	909-886	Tukulti-Ninurta	889-884
Takelot I				Elah	886-885		
				Zimri	885		
Osorkon II	Twenty-third Dynasty			Omri	885-874	Ashurnasirpal II	884-859
	Pedubast			(Tibni)	(885-880)		
Sheshonk II	Sheshonk IV	Jehoshaphat	872-848*	Ahab	874-853	Shalmaneser III	859-824
Takelot II	Osorkon III	Jehoram	854-841*	Ahaziah	853-852		
Sheshonk III	Takelot III	Ahaziah	841	Joram	852-841		
Pami	Amenrud	Athaliah	841-835	Jehu	841-814	Shamshi-Adad V	824-810
Sheshonk V	Osorkon IV	Joash	835-796	Jehoahaz	814-798	Adad-nirari III	810-782
		Amaziah	796-767	Jehoash	798-782	Semiramis (regent)	

		Azariah		Jeroboam II	793-753*	Shalmaneser IV	782-772
<i>Twenty-fourth Dynasty (of Saïs)</i>	<i>Twenty-fifth Dynasty (Ethiopian)</i>	(Uzziah)	790-739*	Zachariah	753-752	Ashur-dan III	772-754
				Shallum	752	Ashur-nirari V	754-746
750-715	715-663	Jotham	750-731*	Menahem	752-742	Tiglath-pileser III	745-727
Tefnakht	Piankhi			Pekahiah	742-740		
Bocchoris	Shabaka	Ahaz	735-715*	Pekah	752-732*		
	Shabataka	Hezekiah	729-686*	Hoshea	732-722	Shalmaneser V	727-722
	Taharka					Sargon II	722-705
	Tanutamon					Sennacherib	705-681
<i>Twenty-sixth Dynasty 663-525</i>		Manasseh	697-642*			Esarhaddon	681-669
Psamtik I	663-610	Amon	642-640			Ashurbanipal	669-627?
		Josiah				Ashur-etil-ilani	627?-?
Necho II	610-595	Jehoahaz	609			Sin-shar-ishkun	?-612
		Jehoiakim	609-598			Ashur-uballit II	612-609
		Jehoiachin	598-597				
Psamtik II	595-589	Zedekiah	597-586			Babylon	
Apries (Hophra)	589-570					Nabopolassar	626-605
Amasis	570-526					Nebuchadnezzar	605-562
Psamtik	526-525						

III							
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** Except for Pekah, the earlier years of these reigns that coincide with the closing years of the preceding reigns represent coregencies. Pekah's years have been reckoned from 752 B.C. although he took over actual control of the kingdom only after murdering Menahem's son Pekahiah.*

Note—The dates of Assyrian kings are generally accepted today as fixed with reasonable certainty within a spring-to-spring year; Ashur-dan II, for example, began to reign at some time between the spring of 933 and the spring of 932; few are more exact than that. The dates for Nebuchadnezzar's reign are astronomically fixed. Regnal dates for Egyptian kings of the Twenty-second to the Twenty-fifth Dynasty are unknown, and the dates here given for the various dynasties are only approximate. The first kings of the Twenty-third Dynasty were contemporary with those of the Twenty-second. Regnal years, even those well established, are not given in exact form (as 931/30, etc.); hence allow the B.C. year to vary plus or minus 1, unless the text gives specific accession dates.

Abijam and Asa (913-869 B.C.) - The next king, Abijam, reigned but briefly (913-911 B.C.), had a war with Jeroboam I, and followed his father in all his vices (1 Kings 15:1-8).

With Asa, Abijam's son, a good king again came to the throne (911-869 B.C.). He removed from influence his grandmother, who had erected an image for Asherah, and banished the male prostitutes as well as idol worship (verses 10-13). After the first peaceful years of his reign, which he devoted to religious reforms, Asa was attacked by the Ethiopians under Zerah, probably Cushites from the eastern shore of the Red Sea (2 Chronicles 14:9-15). When Baasha of Israel occupied part of northern Judah, probably in the 36th year after the division of the kingdom (2 Chronicles 16:1), Asa did not dare to meet the northern army with his own inferior forces, but induced Benhadad of Syria to attack and weaken Israel. For this lack of faith in Jehovah's help Asa was severely rebuked by Hanani the prophet (verses 1-10).

Asa's last years were marked by poor health (verse 12), and accordingly he appointed his son Jehoshaphat as co-ruler, as the chronological data indicate.

Jehoshaphat to Ahaziah (872-841 B.C.) - Jehoshaphat (872-848 B.C.) continued the religious reforms of his good father. Although he failed to remove all the high places, he is credited with having the Levites and priests travel through the country and preach the law (1 Kings 22:43; 2 Chronicles 17:7-9). He terminated the long feud between Judah and Israel by allying himself with the dynasty of Omri, and married crown prince Jehoram of Judah to Ahab's daughter Athaliah (2 Kings 8:18, 26), a union that unfortunately opened the door to Baal worship in Judah. Jehoshaphat also assisted the northern kings in their military campaigns. With Ahab he went against Ramoth-gilead (2 Chronicles 18:28), and with Joram, (See NOTE) king of Israel, against Moab (Kings 3:4-27). He also fought a strong confederacy of Edomites, Moabites, and Ammonites (2 Chronicles 20:1-30). Some nations, however, such as the Philistines and Arabians, were so impressed with Jehoshaphat's accomplishments that they sought his friendship. His attempt to revive Solomon's Ophir expeditions failed when his ships were wrecked at Ezion-geber (verses 35-37).

NOTE: The names Jehoram and Joram are used interchangeably in the Bible. For the sake of convenience and clarity, however, Jehoram is used in this chapter to designate the son of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, and Joram, to designate the son of Ahab, king of Israel (see 2 Kings 8:16).

Jehoram (854-841 B.C.), not to be confused with his contemporary, Joram of Israel, was associated on the throne with his father, Jehoshaphat. Nothing good is said of Jehoram. Influenced by his wicked and idolatrous wife, he encouraged Baal worship in Judah (2 Kings 8:18), fought unsuccessful wars with the Philistines and Arabians (2 Chronicles 21:16, 17; 22:1), and died of an incurable disease as Elijah had predicted (2 Chronicles 21:12-19).

Ahaziah (841 B.C.) followed the corrupt ways of his parents, joined his uncle Joram of Israel in an unsuccessful war against the Syrians (2 Kings 8:26-29), and was mortally wounded in Jehu's plot against Joram of Israel. He died at Megiddo, where he had fled for recovery (2 Kings 9:14-28).

The Kings of Israel; Jeroboam I (931-910 B.C.) - Upon seceding from the dynasty of David, all the tribes except Judah, Benjamin, and Levi summoned Jeroboam, a political exile recently returned from Egypt, whither he had fled from Solomon (1 Kings 12:19, 20). Jeroboam was an Ephraimite chief who had served Solomon as foreman over a gang of workers engaged in building Millo. Resenting Solomon's domestic policies, he had revolted. Encouraged by the prophet Ahijah of Shiloh, he apparently grew bold in his opposition, was probably denounced to Solomon, and consequently fled to Egypt to save his life (1 Kings 11:26-40).

Jeroboam I reigned over the northern kingdom as its first king for 22 years (931-910 B.C.). He made Shechem his first capital, but later transferred it to Tirzah. Tirzah has not as yet been definitely identified, but may have been at the present Tell el-Fâr'ah, about 7 miles (11 km.) north east of Nablus. Excavations have recently been carried out at this mound, which is larger than that of Megiddo, but definite clues as to its identification have not yet been found.

Jeroboam had to fight continual wars with his dissatisfied southern neighbors, first against Rehoboam and then against Abijam (1 Kings 14:30; 15:7). His land seems also to have been devastated during Sheshonk's campaign, although the Bible mentions only Judah and Jerusalem as the victims of attack. However, the evidence shows clearly that Sheshonk also invaded the northern kingdom as well, for he inscribed the names of many northern cities on his Karnak relief. Also a fragment of a victory stele of Sheshonk was discovered in the ruins of Jeroboam's city of Megiddo. Jeroboam may not have kept his promises to Sheshonk and thus have invited this military action that was undertaken against him. Otherwise, it is not clear why Sheshonk, who had given asylum to Jeroboam as a political refugee, so quickly turned against him once he had become king.

For political reasons Jeroboam introduced religious rites and practices that represented a departure from the pure worship of Jehovah. At Bethel and Dan he built temples and made young bulls to represent Jehovah in visible form (1 Kings 12:27-31). For two centuries, the worship of these golden calves became known as the "sin of Jeroboam." Of all but three of his successors on the throne of Israel, it is said that they followed him in this apostasy. An inscribed potsherd found at Samaria throws a curious light on this calf worship. It contains the personal name of a man called Egeljau, meaning "Jehovah is a calf," showing that the Israelites worshiped Jehovah under the form of a young bull, just as the Canaanites thought their god El to be a bull.

Jeroboam also changed the principal festival month, the seventh of the Hebrew ecclesiastical calendar, to the eighth (verses 32, 33). From a study of Israelite chronology, it would also seem that a civil calendar was introduced at this time, which began in the spring, in contrast to the one in use in the southern

kingdom, where the civil year began in the autumn. Since the southern kings used the accession-year system in reckoning their regnal years, Jeroboam introduced the Egyptian nonaccession-year system, probably for no other reason than to be different.

Jeroboam, who began his reign as a rebel against Rehoboam, and also revolted against God and His ordained mode of worship, built his kingdom on the weakest possible foundation. This was true in a political as well as a spiritual sense. Neither his dynasty, which came to an end with the death of his son, nor any of the succeeding dynasties lasted for more than a few years. The kingdom of Israel had 10 dynasties and 20 kings in the 208 years of its existence. Moreover, the nation never escaped from the religious impasse into which Jeroboam had led it. Sinking deeper and deeper into the mire of idolatry and pagan immorality, it was chewed up piecemeal by its enemies, Syria and Assyria, and eventually vanished.

Nadab to Zimri (910-885 B.C.) - The wicked reign of Nadab, Jeroboam's son (910-909 B.C.), was cut short when he was murdered by Baasha in the Philistine town of Gibbethon. Thus ended the first dynasty (1 Kings 15:25-29). This fearful precedent was repeated again and again, until ten different dynasties had reigned over Israel. Baasha (909-886 B.C.) continued to harass Judah, but lost the territory he acquired when he was attacked by Benhadad of Damascus, upon receipt of a bribe from Asa, king of Judah (1 Kings 15:16 to 16:7). Baasha's dynasty ended like the preceding one. His son Elah (886-885 B.C.) was murdered by Zimri, one of his generals, in his capital Tirzah after a reign of less than two years (1 Kings 16:8-10). Zimri made use of his short reign of only seven days by killing all the relatives and friends of Baasha. Then Omri, another general of Elah who was proclaimed king by the Israelite army then engaged in a campaign against the Philistines, marched against Tirzah and took the city. Realizing that resistance was futile, Zimri refused to surrender to Omri, but set fire to the palace and perished in its flames (verses 11-18).

Omri (885-874 B.C.) - Omri became the founder of a dynasty, four kings of which occupied the throne over a period of 44 years (885-841 B.C.). At first Omri had to fight another contender for the throne, Tibni, who had a considerable following among the people. It was only after four years of internal strife that Omri was able to exterminate Tibni and his followers (verses 21-23). This is apparent from the chronological statements in verses 15, 23, which assign the 7 days of Zimri's reign to Asa's 27th year, and Omri's accession to the throne—as sole ruler—in Asa's 31st year.

Omri's reign of 12 years was politically more important than the Bible records indicate. By selecting a strategic site for his capital, Samaria, he did for Israel what David had done in the selection of Jerusalem. This hill, 400 ft. high, was situated in a cuplike plain and could easily be defended. It was apparently never taken by force of arms, and surrendered only for lack of water or food. Excavation has verified the fact intimated in the Biblical records that the site had been uninhabited before the time of Omri. Transferring his capital to this site, he began building extensive defenses that were completed by his son Ahab.

Whether Omri personally had encounters with the Assyrians is unknown, but for the next 100 years, the Assyrian records refer to Israel as "the land of the house of Omri," even long after Omri's dynasty had vanished. His personality, political success, or business enterprises must have made him famous in the eyes of contemporaries and later generations.

Omri established cordial relations with his Phoenician neighbors, and married his son Ahab to Jezebel, daughter of the king of Tyre. This alliance introduced the worship of Baal and Asherah into Israel to an extent previously unknown (1 Kings 16:25). He also granted economic concessions to Damascus and allowed Syrian traders to have shops in Samaria's bazaars (1 Kings 20:34). Since Israel received similar privileges in Damascus only after a military victory over the Syrians, it seems that Omri was defeated by the Syrians and ceded them certain territory and the economic concessions referred to.

Omri was, however, successful in subduing Moab, as the lengthy inscription on the famous Moabite Stone admits, where Mesha, king of Moab, says, "Omri king of Israel, he afflicted Moab many days, because Chemosh was angry with his land". How valuable the possession of Moab was for Israel can be seen from the tribute paid by Moab to Omri's son Ahab. It is said to have amounted—probably annually—to "an hundred thousand lambs, and an hundred thousand rams, with the wool" (2 Kings 3:4).

Ahab (874-853 B.C.) - With Ahab, the next king, a weak ruler came to the throne of Israel. He had no strength to resist his strong-willed Phoenician wife, who was determined to make her own religion supreme. By bringing from her homeland to the royal table hundreds of priests and prophets of Baal and Astarte, by introducing the immoral rites of the Canaanite cult system, and by persecuting and killing the worshipers of the true God, Jezebel caused a religious crisis of the first magnitude (1 Kings 18:4, 19). Because of this crisis and because of the fact that some of the greatest spiritual leaders of Old Testament times, Elijah and Elisha, lived and worked in Israel at that time, the Bible devotes much space to Ahab.

Elijah was called of God to fight for the survival of true religion. A long drought of three and a half years, predicted by the prophet as a judgment of Jehovah, saw Ahab's land brought close to economic ruin. The drought came to an end with Elijah's victory over the Baal priests at Mt. Carmel, where a contest between the power of Jehovah and that of Baal was held (verses 17-40). But so long as Ahab ruled, the pagan cult of Baal flourished. It is remarkable that Ahab did not dare give Baal names to his children—all their known names, Ahaziah, Joram, and Athaliah, contain the abbreviated form of Jehovah. His subjects, however, had few scruples in this matter. Numerous personal names of that and subsequent periods were connected with Baal—Abibaal, Baala, Baalzamar, Baalzakar, and others—as the inscribed potsherds found during the excavation of Samaria show.

Ahab became famous for the "ivory house" he built (1 Kings 22:39; Amos 3:15). Numerous beautifully carved ivory plaques found in the excavation of Samaria reveal that the interior of his palace was probably decorated with ivory. The designs are similar to those found in ivory decorations of Syria and Assyria.

As a warrior, Ahab was moderately successful. Twice he defeated the Syrians. Loot from these two victorious wars enriched him tremendously, and won for him economic concessions in Damascus (1 Kings 20:21, 34). Hence, for a time, he became one of the most powerful rulers west of Assyria. When Shalmaneser III advanced into Syria, Ahab joined his former enemies to make common cause against the Assyrians, and mustered the greatest number of chariots of any of the allies. This fact is revealed in Shalmaneser's list of his opponents in the battle at Qarqar, which is preserved on a historic rock inscription on the upper Tigris. The inscription states that of the 3,940 chariots fighting against the Assyrians 2,000 belonged to Ahab, whereas the other allies had mustered altogether only 1,940. Of the 52,900 foot soldiers Ahab furnished 10,000. When the battle at Qarqar had checked Shalmaneser's

advance, Ahab, conscious of his strength, immediately turned against Damascus to regain possession of the Transjordan city of Ramoth-gilead, but lost his life in that battle (1 Kings 22).

Ahaziah and Joram (853-841 B.C.) - During the short reign of Ahab's son Ahaziah (853-852 B.C.), who was fully as corrupt as his father before him, nothing important happened except perhaps the abortive expedition to Ophir made in cooperation with Jehoshaphat of Judah (2 Chronicles 20:35-37). Since he left no son, Ahaziah was succeeded on the throne by his brother Jehoram (852-841 B.C.). In his time Mesha of Moab revolted. Although a military expedition was undertaken in cooperation with Jehoshaphat of Judah, with disastrous results for Moab, Israel was nevertheless not able to re-establish control of that country, as the Bible record hints (2 Kings 3:4-27) and the inscription of the Moabite Stone claims.

Joram fought several wars against the Syrians. Through the intervention of the prophet Elisha near disasters were twice averted (2 Kings 6 and 7), but Joram's attempt to regain Ramoth-gilead from the Syrians was as much a failure as that experienced by his father, Ahab. Wounded by Hazael of Syria, he went to well-watered Jezreel to recuperate, where he was murdered by his army commander Jehu. The latter proceeded to wipe out the whole family of Omri, including Jezebel, and then usurped the throne himself (2 Kings 8:28, 29; 9:24 to 10:17).

The Dynasty of Jehu (841-752 B.C.) - Jehu (841-814 B.C.), who had been anointed by a messenger of Elisha at Ramoth-gilead, not only put an end to the idolatrous dynasty of Omri but eradicated Baal worship as thoroughly as possible. For his righteous zeal in this respect he was commended by the prophet, and a promise was made that his descendants would sit on Israel's throne to the fourth generation (2 Kings 10:30). Accordingly, his dynasty reigned over the country for about 90 years, nearly half the time of the nation's existence. However, Jehu did not break with Jeroboam's calf worship, and his reform was, as a result, incomplete.

Breaking with the policies of his predecessors, Jehu voluntarily became a vassal of Shalmaneser III and paid tribute immediately upon coming to the throne. This event is depicted on the four sides of Shalmaneser's Black Obelisk, now in the British Museum. The Hebrew king—the first of whom a contemporary representation exists—is shown kneeling before Shalmaneser, while his attendants carry as tribute “silver, gold, a golden saplu-bowl, a golden vase with pointed bottom, golden tumblers, golden buckets, tin, a staff for a king, [and] wooden puruhtu.” (The meaning of the words in italics is still unknown.) Probably Israel reversed its policy toward Assyria in order to secure Assyrian help against Israel's chief enemy, Hazael of Syria.

The 17 years of Jehoahaz' reign (814-798 B.C.) were marked by continual wars against the Syrians, who oppressed Israel first under Hazael and later under his son Benhadad III (2 Kings 13:1-3). The result was that Israel lost much of its territory and its army, so that there remained only 10 chariots, 50 horsemen, and 10,000 foot soldiers (verse 7). A comparison of the 10 chariots of Jehoahaz with the 2,000 of Ahab reveals the great loss of power the kingdom had suffered in 50 years. It is not known who rescued Israel from its sad plight, because the “saviour” of verse 5 is not identified. Either his son Jehoash (see verse 25), or a king of Assyria, or some other person is meant (see on verse 5).

The next king of Israel, Jehoash (798-782 B.C.), was more successful in his wars against the Syrians than his father had been, and in defeating them three times recovered all the territory lost by Jehoahaz (verse 25). Challenged by Amaziah of Judah, he was forced against his will to fight the southern kingdom—the

first war in 100 years between the two brother nations. He worsted Judah's army at the battle of Beth-shemesh, captured the king, and victoriously entered Jerusalem. He broke down part of the city's defenses, and carried vessels from the Temple, royal treasures, and some hostages to Samaria (2 Kings 14:8-14).

The chronological data require a co regency between Jehoash and his son, Jeroboam II, for about 12 years, the only co regency in Israel for which there is evidence. Political prudence on the part of Jehoash may have led to this measure. Knowing the danger a state experiences when a sudden vacancy on the throne occurs, he probably appointed his son Jeroboam as co-ruler and successor when he began his wars of liberation against Syria. In this way, continuity of the dynasty was assured even if the king should lose his life during one of his campaigns.

Jeroboam's recorded reign of 41 years (793-753 B.C.) includes 12 years of co regency with his father, Jehoash. Unfortunately, little is known of his apparently successful reign. The Bible devotes only seven verses to his life (verses 23-29), but they indicate that he regained so much lost territory that his kingdom almost equaled the empire of David and Solomon in extent. With the exception of the territory held by the kingdom of Judah, the extent of his rule was practically the same as that of those great kings. He restored Israelite rule over the coastal and inland regions of Syria, conquered Damascus and Hamath, and occupied Transjordan south to the Dead Sea, which probably means that he made Ammon and Moab tributary to Israel. These tremendous gains were possible only because Assyria was suffering a period of political weakness and was unable to interfere.

Jeroboam II was apparently a strong ruler, but lacked the prudence and foresight of his father. Hence, he made no provision to guarantee continuity of rule, and his kingdom broke up almost immediately after his death. His son, Zachariah, reigned for only six months (753-752 B.C.), and fell victim to the murderous plot of Shallum (2 Kings 15:8-12). Thus, ended Jehu's dynasty, and thereupon the kingdom returned quickly to the political impotence that had characterized it during most of its short history.

The Kingdom of Judah From 841 to 750 B.C., Athaliah to Azariah (Uzziah) - The period under discussion covers the history of Judah during the time of the Jehu dynasty in Israel. The end of Azariah's (Uzziah's) reign did not come in 750 B.C., but this date marks the approximate beginning of the new Assyrian Empire, when Israel and Judah became fatally involved in the expanding Assyrian conquests. Since Jotham, Azariah's son, was appointed co-ruler with his father in 750 B.C., this date is a convenient boundary for this survey of the history of the kingdom of Judah.

When Ahaziah of Judah was slain by Jehu, in 841 B.C., Ahaziah's mother, Athaliah, seized the throne for six years (841-835 B.C.). A daughter of the cruel and unscrupulous Ahab of Israel, she had "all the seed royal" exterminated in order that her own rule might be assured. However, her henchmen missed the young prince Joash, who was rescued by the high priest Jehoiada and his wife Jehosheba, a sister of the late king (2 Kings 11:1-3).

Joash (835-796 B.C.), having been educated in the home of Jehoiada, was placed on the throne at the age of seven, and Athaliah's government was overthrown and the wicked queen killed (2 Kings 11:4-21). As long as the young king allowed Jehoiada to guide his affairs he acted prudently and piously, removing Baal worship and promoting extensive Temple repairs (2 Kings 12:1-16; 2 Chronicles 24:1-14). After Jehoiada's death, however, he waxed indifferent, and even had his benefactor's son Zechariah stoned to death for reproving him because of his evil deeds (2 Chronicles 24:15-22). When Hazael of Damascus

marched against him, he bought himself and his country off with some of the Temple treasures. This act of cowardliness, together with his murder of Zechariah and domestic and religious grievances, apparently resulted in deep-seated opposition to him. He was assassinated by his own servants and buried in the city of David, not in the royal sepulchers (2 Kings 12:17-21; 2 Chronicles 24:25).

His son, Amaziah (796-767 B.C.), first of all disposed of the murderers of his father and consolidated his own position. Planning the reconquest of Edom, which had formerly belonged to Judah, he hired 100,000 mercenaries, but later discharged them at the direction of a man of God. With his own Judean forces he gained a victory over the Edomites and conquered the Edomite capital, Sela, probably Petra. Meanwhile the discharged mercenaries plundered the cities of northern Judah. As a result of his victory over the Edomites, Amaziah became overbearing and challenged Jehoash of Israel to fight against him. This unwise move had disastrous results, for Judah practically became a vassal of Israel. Having also turned away from the true God, he lost the confidence of his people. He was assassinated at Lachish (2 Chronicles 25:1-28).

Amaziah was succeeded on the throne by his son, Azariah, whose second name—probably a throne name—was Uzziah (790-739 B.C.). His reign is described as upright, successful, and prosperous. He promoted the economic development of the country (2 Chronicles 26:10) and raised a large and well-equipped army (2 Chronicles 26:11-15). This enabled him to campaign against the Philistines and Arabians (verse 7), and to recover Elath (probably a tell in modern Aqaba) on the Gulf of Aqabah (2 Kings 14:22), as well, probably, as Edomite territory lying between Judah and the gulf. The Ammonites deemed it wise to buy themselves off with gifts (2 Chronicles 26:8). During his reign a severe earthquake must have occurred, one that was remembered for centuries as an outstanding event (Amos 1:1; Zechariah 14:5).

The political weakness of Egypt and Assyria, which had assisted Jeroboam II in making Israel once more a prosperous and powerful nation, had likewise favored Uzziah, with the result that the two kingdoms, combined, possessed approximately the same area in 750 B.C. as that over which David and Solomon had ruled. This was the last period of Hebrew prosperity. The accession of Tiglath-pileser in 745 B.C. and the consequent rebirth of the Assyrian Empire marked the beginning of a rapid decline in power for both Israel and Judah.

The Last Years of the Kingdom of Israel (752-722 B.C.), Shallum to Hoshea - After the assassination of Zachariah of Israel, last king of the powerful and long-lived dynasty of Jehu, a 30-year period of anarchy and political decline followed, bringing the rapid breakup and eventual extinction of the kingdom. Shallum, the murderer of Zachariah, followed his predecessor in death after a reign of only one month (752 B.C.). He was in turn assassinated by Menahem (2 Kings 15:8-15). Menahem (752-742 B.C.) was a cruel ruler who put down all opposition to his rule by extremely severe measures (verse 16). That the enormous Syrian territories that Jeroboam II once controlled had by this time been definitely lost is certain, although the fact is not mentioned in the Bible. Recognizing the power of Assyria as something he would not be able to resist, Menahem followed the wisest procedure possible under the circumstances, voluntarily paying enormous sums of tribute in order that he might be left in peace by Tiglath-pileser III. The latter was at that time restoring Assyrian rule to large sections of Syrian territory. Menahem's tribute, levied from the population by a special tax, is mentioned both in the Bible (verses 19, 20) and in Assyrian records.

Pekahiah, Menahem's son, was able to hold the throne for only two years (742-740 B.C.), when he was assassinated, like so many of Israel's kings before him. His murderer, Pekah, who counted his regnal years from the time of Menahem's accession to the throne, as the chronological data indicate, may have been related either to Jehu's dynasty or to King Shallum, and therefore ignored the two last rulers by including their 12 years of reign as part of his own. Another possible explanation of the problems posed by Pekah's chronological data may be that he ruled over an insignificant part of the country and did not recognize Menahem and Pekahiah as legitimate rulers. Whatever his reasons for usurping their regnal years may have been, it is quite certain that he enjoyed a sole reign of only about eight years (740-732 B.C.).

Pekah discontinued the pro-Assyrian policy of his predecessors and concluded an anti-Assyrian alliance with Rezin II of Damascus and other Syrian rulers. He next moved against Judah to enforce its participation in the anti-Assyrian league. This campaign is known as the Syro-Ephraimite war. Although the confederates did great damage to Judah and annexed some of its territory, they failed to reach their aim. Ahaz of Judah asked and received the assistance of Tiglath-pileser of Assyria, who moved into Pekah's kingdom, occupied the greater part of Galilee and Gilead, and deported the inhabitants of these regions to the east (2 Kings 16:5-9; 15:27-29). He also took the seacoast as far as Philistia. The Assyrian invasion broke the unnatural alliance between Israel and Syria. Tiglath-pileser attacked Syria, conquered Damascus, and captured King Rezin II (732 B.C.). Syria and the conquered parts of Israel were made Assyrian provinces and henceforth were administered by Assyrian governors.

Hoshea (732-722 B.C.) - Pekah's unhappy reign ended in disaster at the hand of an assassin, Hoshea, who ascended Israel's throne as its 20th and last king (732-722 B.C.). Tiglath-pileser III claims to have set Hoshea on the throne, and indicates that Pekah's rule was overthrown by his subjects as a result of his disastrous policies. Hoshea paid heavy tribute to Tiglath-pileser in exchange for the right of being tolerated as a vassal king of Assyria. The amount of annual tribute must have been an almost unbearable burden for the little state, which now consisted of but an insignificant portion of the former kingdom, and for this reason Israel revolted. Desperation may have been Hoshea's chief motive in forming a hopeless alliance against Assyria with So, a weak king of the Twenty-fourth Dynasty of Egypt who ruled over part of that land at the time. Shalmaneser V, who had in the meantime succeeded his father, Tiglath-pileser III, on the throne of Assyria, laid siege to Samaria and took that strongly fortified city after three years (2 Kings 18:10). The fall of the city probably occurred in the last year of Shalmaneser V (723-722 B.C.). Sargon II, who claims in much later inscriptions to have captured Samaria during the first year of his reign, probably had no right to this claim, at least as king. He was apparently Shalmaneser's army commander and may have actually carried out the conquest of the city and the deportation of the 27,290 Israelite captives.

The fall of Samaria marked the end of the northern kingdom of Israel after a tragic history of little more than two centuries. Conceived and born in the spirit of rebellion, it had no chance of survival. Twenty kings with an average rule of 10 1/2 years had sat upon the throne, 7 of them as murderers of their predecessors. The first king had introduced a corrupted worship, setting up idolatrous representations of Jehovah, and all succeeding rulers followed him in this "sin," some adding to it the worship of Baal and Astarte. Had it not been for the tireless ministry of such reformers as Elijah, Elisha, and other prophets, the kingdom of Israel might not have endured as long as it did.

The Kingdom of Judah From 750-731 B.C., Azariah (Uzziah) to Jotham - After a long and successful reign Uzziah contracted leprosy, which came to him as a punishment for having entered the Temple to offer incense (2 Chronicles 26:16-20). His son, Jotham, was then appointed coregent (2 Kings 15:5), a wise move to guarantee the continuity of the dynasty. The policy of appointing the crown prince as coregent was followed for more than a century, from Amaziah to Manasseh.

The record of Uzziah's leprosy shows that quarantine was imposed on a victim who contracted that disease, and that even a king was required to submit to enforced isolation during life and was given a separate burial when he died. In 1931 a tablet was found in the collection of the Russian Archeological Museum on the Mount of Olives at Jerusalem, which contains the following inscription in Aramaic, "Hither were brought the bones of Uzziah, king of Judah—do not disturb" The form of the script shows that the tablet was cut about the time of Christ or a little earlier, probably at a time when Uzziah's bones, for some unknown reason, had been moved to a new resting place.

Jotham (750-731 B.C.), after having ruled for his leprous father for 12 years, in his 16th year appointed his son Ahaz as ruler. Jotham lived but four years longer (see 2 Kings 15:33 cf. verse 30). Like his father, Jotham was a comparatively upright ruler. The three contemporary Hebrew prophets, Isaiah, Hosea, and Micah, probably exerted a good influence upon him. He witnessed the abortive invasion by Rezin of Syria and Pekah of Israel (verse 37), which was probably his reason for appointing Ahaz as coregent, but the major threat to Judah's existence came after this time.

Ahaz (735—715 B.C.) - Jotham's son Ahaz remained impassive to the influence of the prophets and worshiped idols. He caused "his son to pass through the fire. ... And he sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree" (2 Kings 16:3, 4). Distrusting and rejecting divine help in the Syro-Ephraimite war (Isaiah 7:3-13), he turned to Tiglath-pileser III and bought his aid with treasures taken from the Temple and the palace (2 Kings 16:7, 8). When Tiglath-pileser conquered Damascus, Ahaz appeared in his entourage. In Damascus, he became acquainted with the Assyrian mode of worship and proceeded immediately to introduce it into his own kingdom. Hence, he sent from Damascus instructions to Jerusalem to have an Assyrian altar made, like one he had seen there. This new altar replaced the one Solomon had set up for burnt offerings, and was kept in use for some time (verses 10-16).

Ahaz, like his predecessors, seems to have appointed his son Hezekiah (729-686 B.C.) as coregent when he saw that the kingdom of Judah would probably become involved in trouble with Assyria. For Hezekiah's reign, considerable information is available both in the Bible and from secular sources. The events described in 2 Kings 18 to 20 are paralleled in Isaiah 36 to 39 and 2 Chronicles 29 to 32. Other information is given in Jeremiah 26:17-19 concerning messages of the prophet Micah in Hezekiah's time, and the inscriptions of Sargon II and Sennacherib serve as extra-Biblical source material for the two Assyrian campaigns of that period.

Hezekiah (729-686 B.C.) - Hezekiah was a good ruler and initiated a series of religious reforms, probably after the death of his wicked father in 715 B.C. For these he was highly commended by the Bible writer (2 Kings 18:3, 4). He also established control over areas of Philistia, strengthened the national defense system, and encouraged trade and agriculture by building warehouses and sheepfolds (2 Kings 18:8; 2 Chronicles 32:28, 29). A remarkable technical accomplishment of his reign was the boring of a 1,749-ft. (6,533 metres) tunnel from the well of Gihon in the Kidron Valley to a lower pool inside the

city of Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 32:4, 30; 2 Kings 20:20). In this way he assured Jerusalem of a continuous supply of water. Even now, after more than 2,500 years, the waters of Gihon still flow through this tunnel into the Pool of Siloam.

In 1880 boys wading through the tunnel accidentally discovered a Hebrew inscription, now in the Archeological Museum at Istanbul, which had been cut into the rock after the completion of the tunnel. It reads as follows:

“[The tunnel] was bored. And this was the manner in which it was cut. While [the workmen were] still [lifting up] axes, each toward his neighbor, and while three cubits remained to be cut through, [there was heard] the voice one calling the other, since there was a crevice in the rock on the right side [and on the left]. And when the tunnel was bored, the stonecutters struck, each to meet his fellow, axe against axe; and the water flowed from the spring to the pool for 1,200 cubits, and the height of the rock above the heads of the stonecutters was 100 cubits.”

Hezekiah, however, is best known for his faith in Jehovah at the time of one of Sennacherib's invasions of Judah, which resulted in the miraculous destruction of a vast Assyrian army. Hezekiah had inherited the Assyrian vassalship from his father, but while the Assyrian kings were busily engaged in Mesopotamia, Hezekiah strengthened his defenses in the hope of shaking off the Assyrian yoke, with the help of the Ethiopian kings of the Twenty-fifth Egyptian Dynasty. The prophet Isaiah was vehemently opposed to such a policy (Isaiah 18:1-5; 30:1-5; 31:1-3), but proved unable to change Hezekiah's mind. The king was determined to break with Assyria whatever the results might be, and accordingly severed his connections with the empire. As a result, he experienced several Assyrian invasions.

The first invasion of Palestine, by Sargon II, was not accompanied by serious results, however. Judah lost nothing more than its coastal region. Isaiah in the meantime walked the streets of Jerusalem and solemnly but unsuccessfully proclaimed his prophecies against Egypt and all her allies (Isaiah 20). The first great blow came in 701 B.C., when Sennacherib invaded Palestine. His army went through the land like a steam roller, leaving in its path only destruction and ruin. Too late, Hezekiah reversed his policy and sent tribute to Sennacherib at Lachish. Sennacherib, however, demanded the unconditional surrender of Jerusalem. That he did not take the city is attested by his own words, which claim no more than that he laid siege to it. Events elsewhere in his vast domain apparently became more pressing, with the result that he lifted the siege and returned to Assyria.

The sickness of Hezekiah, described in 2 Kings 20, must have occurred about the same time as the Assyrian invasion of his 14th year, 15 years before his death (2 Kings 18:13; 20:6; 18:2). That Isaiah, when promising Hezekiah healing, assured him also that the city would not be taken (2 Kings 20:6) implies that the sickness came shortly before Sennacherib's campaign. This explains also, why Hezekiah was so friendly to the messengers of Merodach-baladan (Marduk-apal-iddina), the exiled king of Babylon, who, as a sworn enemy of Assyria, Hezekiah probably considered a welcome potential ally in his struggle for independence. Isaiah, however, who had warned against an alliance with Egypt, was as much opposed to one with Babylon's king in exile.

About ten years later, when Taharka of Egypt had come to the throne, Sennacherib returned to Palestine to force a showdown with the defiant Hezekiah. Sennacherib first dispatched a letter calling upon Hezekiah to surrender. The king of Judah, encouraged by Isaiah, refused this demand and saw his faith in

Isaiah's sure promise of divine intervention rewarded. The great Assyrian army met with dreadful disaster before the gates of Jerusalem (2 Kings 18 and 2 Kings 19).

Manasseh to Josiah (697—609 B.C.) - The last 15 years of Hezekiah's life were probably occupied in rebuilding his devastated country. Some 10 years before his death he made his son Manasseh coregent as the chronological data indicate. Manasseh's long reign of 55 years (697-642 B.C.) was filled with wickedness. He rebuilt the altars to Baal, served Astarte, used witchcraft, sacrificed little children, and "worshipped all the host of heaven" (2 Chronicles 33:1-10). The Assyrian kings Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal mention Manasseh as their vassal. At some time during his reign, he must have rebelled, for one of these two Assyrian kings "bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon" (verse 11). Although it seems somewhat strange that he was taken to Babylon instead of to Nineveh, it should be remembered that the Assyrian kings of this time considered Babylon their second capital. Manasseh's offense cannot have been very serious, for he was pardoned and restored to his former position (verses 12, 13). Assyrian officials had in the meantime administered the country and probably looted it thoroughly. That Manasseh, upon his return from Babylon to Judah, found an extremely impoverished country, is apparent from a document of that time wherein it is noted that the country of Ammon paid a tribute of 2 minas of gold, Moab, 1 mina of gold, while poor Judah paid only 10 minas of silver. The troubles Manasseh experienced at least had the advantage of bringing him to the point of conversion (verses 12-20).

His son Amon (642-640 B.C.) was fully as wicked as Manasseh had been before his conversion, with the result that his servants killed him after a brief reign of two years (2 Kings 21:19-26; 2 Chronicles 33:21-25).

Amon's young son, Josiah (640-609 B.C.), ascended the throne upon the assassination of his father. Being religiously inclined, he introduced a number of reforms, beginning at the young age of 15 or 16 years to abolish high places, sacred pagan pillars, and Baal altars (2 Chronicles 34:3). During repair work on the Temple in Josiah's 18th regnal year (623-622 B.C.) the "book of the law" was found. Becoming familiar with its precepts, he inaugurated a thorough purge of paganism and idolatry throughout the kingdom of Judah and in adjacent areas of the former kingdom of Israel (2 Kings 22 and 23; 2 Chronicles 34:6, 7). This indicates that he had established some kind of political control over territory that had, since 722 B.C., been an Assyrian province. Through the impotence of Assyria after Ashurbanipal's death in 627 (?) B.C., and the rapid disintegration of the Assyrian Empire, the former territory of the ten tribes seems to have fallen into Josiah's lap like an overripe apple. He applied his power and influence to secure religious reforms throughout Palestine, and might have succeeded except for his untimely death.

This short survey of Judah's history during the time of the new Assyrian Empire, from Azariah's last years to Josiah, reveals a sad picture. Although Judah was spared the tragic fate that befell the northern kingdom, the country was bled white of all its resources by Assyria's heavy demands for tribute. In Hezekiah's time, a glorious and miraculous deliverance was experienced, but even then, a terrible price was paid for previous political blunders, and Judah found itself devastated from one end to the other. Only Jerusalem had escaped destruction. The writers of the Bible, who viewed the political history of their nation in the light of faithfulness or disobedience to God, show how the many misfortunes that came to Judah were the result of apostasy. Since half the number of kings reigning during this period were unfaithful to God, it is not surprising that the nation did not fare well.

Egypt in the Saïte Period, Twenty-sixth Dynasty (663-525 B.C.)

This period deals with a political revival of Egypt that continued for nearly one and a half centuries. In contrast to the previous period, when it was ruled by foreigners from the south, Egypt found itself once more independent, governed by Egyptians from the north. Since this dynasty originated in Saïs, it is usually called the Saïte Dynasty.

The history of this period is based to a great extent on Herodotus' account, and therefore lacks exactness in many details. For example, the battle of Carchemish, in which Necho II was severely defeated by Nebuchadnezzar—attested in the Bible and by archeology—is not even mentioned. The reasons for the defects in Herodotus' history lie in the fact that he based his work, not on written records, but on oral information secured during a visit to Egypt about 445 B.C., when the events described lay 80 or more years in the past. Nevertheless, much correct information may be gained from a careful study of Herodotus' reports, which, when sifted and compared with more nearly contemporary sources and with information given in the Bible, permit an approximately reliable reconstruction of the history of the period.

Necho I, a city prince of Saïs, perhaps a descendent of Tefnakht of the Twenty-fourth Dynasty, had been given the title of king by Esarhaddon for taking part in a rebellion against the Assyrians during Taharka's time he was sent to Assyria as a prisoner, but succeeded in regaining the confidence of Ashurbanipal and was restored to his office and throne at Saïs.

Psamtik I (663—610 B.C.) - After Necho I had been killed by Tanutamoni, his energetic son Psamtik I turned to the Assyrians for help. When the Ethiopian Dynasty was expelled from Egypt by the Assyrians, Psamtik received the kingship of Memphis as a reward for valuable services rendered during the campaign, and other parts of the country were put under the rulership of various local princes. However, when Ashurbanipal was busily engaged in settling the Babylonian revolt led by his own brother, Psamtik managed through clever moves and without great difficulty to rid himself of Assyrian control. With the help of Gyges of Lydia, he took Thebes in 655 B.C., and in 14 years all Egypt was in his hands.

Psamtik established and maintained his rule with the help of mercenary forces. Greeks from the Ionian Islands, Jews from Palestine, Carians from Asia Minor, and others served in his army and manned his fortresses. He favored Greek colonists, and received an income tax of 20 per cent from the population, but left priests and soldiers tax exempt in order to retain the loyalty of these two most important classes, whose good will an Egyptian king needed. The culture of the time represented an imitation or revival of the classical period. Pyramids of the old kingdom were repaired, ancient titularies were revived, mortuary inscriptions of the pyramids were again copied and carved into tomb walls, and statues and reliefs were executed in the ancient style.

After reuniting Egypt and re-establishing its political independence, Psamtik seems to have played with the plan of rebuilding the Egyptian Asiatic empire of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Dynasties. In 640 B.C., he marched into Palestine, where he besieged the Philistine city of Ashdod for years; but the Scythian invasion of that time put an end to his dreams of empire. He was able to buy himself off by a heavy tribute and thereby avoided an invasion of Egypt. Having already overextended their lines of communication, the Scythians seem also to have welcomed Psamtik's conciliatory advances, and were

apparently happy to call off the intended invasion without losing face. From Babylonian records, it is evident that Egypt assisted Assyria for several years during its last struggle against the Medes and Babylonians. Psamtik apparently wanted to keep Assyria alive as a buffer state against the new powers of the east.

Necho II (610—595 B.C.) - When Necho II, Psamtik's son, came to the throne, he pursued his father's policies. He marched north in the spring or summer of 609 B.C. to aid the weak Assyrian forces of Ashur-uballit against the Medes and Babylonians. King Josiah of Judah, apparently an ally of the Babylonians, withstood him near Megiddo and died of wounds received there in battle. Necho's march to the north failed to stave off the end of the Assyrian kingdom, as is implied by the Babylonian Chronicle. However, Necho's army apparently did not suffer a defeat, because three months after the battle of Megiddo he was able from his temporary headquarters at Riblah in Syria to impose a heavy tribute on Judah and to remove Josiah's anti-Egyptian son, Jehoahaz, who was replaced by Jehoiakim, his more pro-Egyptian brother (2 Chronicles 35:20-24; 36:1-4). A stele of Necho found at Sidon is also proof that he exercised some degree of control over Phoenicia during those years, while the Babylonian Chronicle records two Egyptian victories over Babylonian garrisons in the year 606/5 B.C.

Having successfully eliminated Assyria, the Babylonians felt they must curtail Egyptian power. The aged and ailing Nabopolassar therefore sent Nebuchadnezzar, the crown prince, against the Egyptian army at Carchemish. In the ensuing battle, fought in the spring or early summer of 605 B.C., the Egyptians were twice beaten, first at Carchemish, and a little later near Hamath. In August, 605 B.C., when Nebuchadnezzar was the unchallenged master of all Syria and perhaps also of Palestine, he was ready to invade Egypt. At that time he received the report of his father's death, and immediately returned to Babylonia. This saved Necho and Egypt. Although the Egyptian army, after the defeat at Carchemish, probably never saw the Euphrates again, it remained strong enough to inflict heavy losses on Nebuchadnezzar's army once more in 601 B.C.

Necho is credited with having begun a canal between the Nile and the Red Sea, in which project 120,000 men are said to have perished. He abandoned the work before completion, however, when his engineers convinced him that the Red Sea level was higher than the Mediterranean Sea, and that Lower Egypt would be flooded as soon as the waters of the Red Sea should pour into the finished canal. Recognizing this mistake, Darius I had this canal completed some 80 years later. It was in use for many centuries, the forerunner of the present Suez Canal. Herodotus tells us that in Necho's time Phoenician sailors accomplished, in three years, the first circumnavigation of Africa.

Psamtik II (595—589 B.C.) - Of Psamtik II, Necho's son, not much more is known than that he attempted to reconquer Nubia and that he once visited Palestine (John Rylands Demotic Papyrus, No. IX), probably to organize anti-Babylonian resistance. Jeremiah 27:3 may refer to the time of this activity, when envoys of different nations were gathered at Jerusalem, only to be warned by Jeremiah of the disastrous results of a revolt against the king of Babylonia.

Apries (589—570 B.C.) - Apries, the Biblical Hophra (Jeremiah 44:30), continued his father's work and actively plotted against Babylon. It was he who encouraged Zedekiah, king of Judah, in his rebellion against Nebuchadnezzar. He won a naval battle against Tyre and Cyprus, and occupied Sidon. All Phoenicia became subject to him for a short time. Egyptian antiquities found at Arvad, Tyre, and Sidon show how great his influence was throughout the coastal region of Syria. This success made such an

impression on the lesser states of Palestine that they put their trust in Egyptian arms and revolted against Babylon. Hophra actually made an attempt to relieve Jerusalem when it was besieged by Nebuchadnezzar's army, but was not able to do more than draw the besieging forces away from Jerusalem temporarily (Jeremiah 37:5-11).

An Aramaic letter probably written during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar by King Adon of Ashkelon (?) was found a few years ago in Egypt. In this letter Adon told Pharaoh that the Babylonian army was marching along the coast of Palestine toward the south and that it had advanced as far as Aphek. He requested immediate help from Egypt in order to resist.

The pathetic plea of a Palestinian ruler, who, like King Zedekiah, had listened to the false inducements of Egypt and rebelled against the Babylonian overlord, helps us to understand the terrible disappointment the people of Jeremiah's time must have felt when all their hopes were shattered by the inactivity of the Egyptian army, or by the inadequate help it provided them in their fight against the Babylonians. This letter demonstrates how truly were being fulfilled Jeremiah's prophecies, in which he had exhorted the nations surrounding Judah to serve Nebuchadnezzar faithfully and warned them of the terrible consequences if they rebelled against him (Jeremiah 27:2-11).

During the course of a military revolt the army commander Ahmose was proclaimed king of Egypt by the soldiers. Apries, with the loyal section of his army, then fought against Ahmose, but was defeated, taken prisoner, and forced to recognize Ahmose as coregent. Two years later a quarrel broke out between the two rulers, which resulted in another bloody battle and the death of Apries, whom Ahmose great heartedly gave a royal burial.

In 568 B.C., not long after Apries' death, Amasis (Ahmose) seems to have been confronted with a serious threat in the form of a military campaign led by Nebuchadnezzar. Unfortunately, the only document recording this event is so badly preserved that we know nothing more than that Nebuchadnezzar marched against Egypt in his 37th regnal year. About three years earlier Ezekiel had prophesied that the Lord would give Egypt to Nebuchadnezzar as "wages" for his siege of Tyre. Although the result of the campaign of 568 B.C. against Egypt is unknown, it seems certain that Amasis suffered defeat (see Ezekiel 29:17-20).

For the most part, however, the reign of Amasis (570-526 B.C.) seems to have been peaceful. He was a friend of the Greeks; and Naucratis, the Egyptian city where most of the Greeks resident in Egypt lived, became the chief trading center of the country. With his navy, this Pharaoh held Cyprus, and also concluded treaties with Croesus of Lydia, the Spartans, and, in 547 B.C., with Nabonidus of Babylon against Cyrus of Persia.

After Ahmose' long reign his son Psamtik III (526-525 B.C.) reigned for only a year. In 525 B.C. Cambyses, second king of the Persian Empire, conquered Egypt and deposed Psamtik. The country was then made a Persian satrapy.

The Neo-Babylonian Empire From 626 to 586 B.C.

Babylonia had enjoyed a long and illustrious history before the Assyrians became masters of the Mesopotamian valley. The empire of Sargon of Akkad and that of the Amorite king Hammurabi had given a luster to Babylonia that survived the long centuries of political impotence during which the Assyrians ruled over this part of the ancient world. Babylonian language and script, its literature and culture, were considered the classical patterns; and for one reason or another Marduk, the god of the Babylonians, held a magic spell over all Mesopotamian peoples. The Assyrians conquered and occupied Babylonia repeatedly during the centuries of their supreme rule over Mesopotamia, but usually treated that country with respect. It was therefore never completely incorporated into the Assyrian Empire, and always enjoyed a status different from that of other subject nations. Sennacherib dared to destroy the city, but his contemporaries and even many Assyrians considered this such a sacrilegious and blasphemous crime that his son Esarhaddon rebuilt the city as soon as he came to the throne.

This ancient and apparently immortal glory that surrounded Babylon made it possible for the Neo-Babylonian Empire to establish itself quickly in the minds of men after the downfall of the Assyrian kingdom, and gave its memory a luster that long survived its brief life of less than a century.

The establishment of the new Babylonian kingdom by Nabopolassar and his campaigns against Assyria have been discussed in connection with the breakup of the Assyrian Empire. Since this chapter deals with ancient history only to 586 B.C., the year of Jerusalem's destruction, the events of the last 45 years of the Babylonian Empire will be discussed later in this book.

Sources - For reasons not yet entirely clear, few contemporary historical inscriptions of the Neo-Babylonian Empire period are known. Many economic texts shed some light on the period, and building inscriptions provide information on the extensive construction activities of the Babylonian monarchs. But no royal annals or display inscriptions yet found have been equal in any way to those of the Assyrian emperors. The deplorable absence of historical inscriptions and the scarcity of chronicles, earlier attributed to Babylonian reluctance to record political or military events, are more likely due to the accidents of preservation and discovery. The Babylonian Chronicle was long known and published in parts. In 1923 and 1956 collections of those from the Neo-Babylonian period were issued (including several hitherto unpublished portions found among the cuneiform tablets of the British Museum). This provides a year-by-year account of political events from Nabopolassar's accession year to the year 11 of Nebuchadnezzar except for a break of seven years in Nabopolassar's reign. The so-called Nabonidus Chronicle, although broken, gives an account of the happenings of a number of years during the reign of the last Babylonian king.

On the whole, however, there are extremely few cuneiform records available for a reconstruction of the history of the new Babylonian period. It is therefore a matter of satisfaction that the Bible contains more detailed records of this period than of any other period of Bible history. The information provided in the books of Kings, Chronicles, Jeremiah, and Daniel, added to that found in Josephus' works and that of the available cuneiform records, makes it possible to piece together a fairly clear picture of what happened in this significant period of the ancient world that marked the end of the kingdom of Judah.

Chronology - The chronology of the Neo-Babylonian Empire is fixed. A tablet in the Berlin Museum contains the records of numerous astronomical observations made during the 37th year of

Nebuchadnezzar's reign. When these records were checked by astronomers it became apparent that the phenomena described occurred in the Babylonian calendar year equivalent to 568/567 B.C., spring to spring. Since it is possible in this way to determine the 37th regnal year of Nebuchadnezzar to the exact day, in terms of B.C. dates, it is easy with the help of the tens of thousands of dated business documents of that time to reconstruct the complete reign of this monarch and of the other kings of the Neo-Babylonian Empire. Since the chronology secured in this manner agrees perfectly with the list of Babylonian kings contained in the Canon of Ptolemy, there is no doubt that the chronology of the new empire period is based on solid facts.

Nabopolassar (626-605 B.C.) - Events exceptionally favored Nabopolassar, who had been an independent monarch over Babylonia under the last shadow kings of Assyria. He gained all for which Marduk-apal-iddina (Merodachbaladan) had fought hard for many years. He not only established a Babylonian empire under a Chaldean monarchy but also had the joy of seeing Assyria, his greatest enemy, fall in the dust. When Nineveh was destroyed by the Medes and Babylonians in 612 B.C., Cyaxares and Nabopolassar divided between themselves the territory of the fallen Assyrian colossus. Thus there fell to the Babylonian king an empire that, nominally at least, reached from the Persian Gulf through Mesopotamia, Syria, and Palestine, to the borders of Egypt. The Medes were satisfied to receive the northern and Anatolian provinces of the former Assyrian Empire. Furthermore, relations between the two new powers remained cordial and were never disturbed—as far as our incomplete knowledge of that period goes. Their mutual friendship was sealed by a marriage between Nebuchadnezzar, Nabopolassar's son and heir, and the Median princess Amuhia (Amyhia).

The years after the fall of Nineveh were used to consolidate the newly acquired territory and to crush the remnants of the Assyrian kingdom that fought for existence under their king Ashur-uballit II in the region of Haran, aided by Egyptian forces. For several years, the Babylonian king gained no decisive victory, though Assyrian strength must have been weakened. By 609 B.C. the Assyrian forces seem to have been completely eliminated, and from that time on are not mentioned any more as military opponents, but King Necho of Egypt had, through his victory over Josiah, come into possession of Judea, and had also occupied Syria and parts of northern Mesopotamia. Since Nabopolassar considered himself the heir to the territories that had belonged to the Assyrian Empire, he could not permit Egypt to remain in possession of the Asiatic territories occupied by Necho. By the end of 606 B.C., Nabopolassar had pacified his Mesopotamian possessions and could pay more attention to the Egyptian menace in the west, where the Babylonian garrison forces were sorely pressed. Since the aged king was ailing, the crown prince, Nebuchadnezzar, was entrusted with the campaign against the Egyptians. Decisive victories over the Egyptian army were gained first at Carchemish on the Euphrates, and a few weeks later near Hamath in Syria. In the summer of 605 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar was ready for the invasion of Egypt when news reached him of his father's death on the 8th of Ab (approximately August 15, 605). This led to his immediate return to Babylon and his accession to the throne on Elul 1 (approximately September 7).

Nebuchadnezzar II (605-562 B.C.) - In Nebuchadnezzar II, Nabopolassar had a worthy successor, and Babylon a successful and illustrious king. He carried out many military campaigns, especially against Judah, as we know from the Bible and from the recently discovered Babylonian Chronicle, and was able to pacify the countries belonging to his empire. Yet, he devoted most of his energies and resources to works of peace. His chief ambition was to make his capital the most glorious metropolis of the world.

Tremendous sums of money were spent in building palaces, temples, and fortifications; Nebuchadnezzar could say, “Is not this great Babylon, that I have built?” (Daniel 4:30).

The Kingdom of Judah From 609 to 586 B.C.

Chronology - Fortunately, the chronology of Egypt and Babylonia is well established for the period from Josiah to Zedekiah. Certain Judean regnal dates synchronize with Babylonian dates based on astronomical records; thus, the B.C. dating of the kings of Judah can be established with a high degree of accuracy. The most recently published portion of the Babylonian Chronicle moves five kings of Judah (Manasseh to Jehoiakim) a year earlier than dated in previous printings, but it confirms several key events and yields precise dates for the accessions of Jehoiachin and Zedekiah.

Josiah’s Death, and Jehoahaz - In a previous section of this chapter, the history of Judah was traced as far as King Josiah’s time. A major part of his reign fell in the years of the disintegration of the Assyrian Empire, when the Assyrians were not strong enough to control their western possessions effectively and Babylonia had not yet taken over these possessions. Josiah took advantage of the situation to extend his influence, perhaps even political control, over considerable parts of the territory that had formerly belonged to the kingdom of Israel, and that had more recently been administered as an Assyrian province.

For a time Josiah profited from the Mesopotamian situation. However, he watched with some apprehension the rebirth of Egyptian power. In view of the fact that Egypt was committed to the policy of preventing the complete collapse of Assyria, Egyptian forces must have traversed Palestine several times during Josiah’s reign. Josiah may have felt that Pharaoh had other plans than merely to keep Assyria alive—aspirations of rebuilding the former Egyptian Empire in Asia—and that he proposed to exchange military help with Assyria for political concessions in Syria and Palestine. It is unknown whether Josiah had actually made an agreement with Nabopolassar of Babylon and resisted Necho II in order to aid his Babylonian ally, or whether he took his stand merely on the basis of his conviction that if the Egyptians and Assyrians should defeat the Babylonians, Judah would be forced to submit either to Egypt or to Assyria. One or the other reason must have prompted his unfortunate decision to meet Necho and prevent him from marching north to assist the Assyrians.

The battle took place at Megiddo, in 609 B.C. The date is based on the Babylonian Chronicle, which mentions the Egyptians as aiding the Assyrians at Haran in that year. Josiah was mortally wounded (see on 2 Chronicles 35:20-24), and defeated Judah had to submit to Egypt. However, at that time Necho hurried on to the north without following up his victory over Josiah. He was more concerned with a decision against Babylonia, since a victory there would give him a free hand in Palestine.

In the meantime Jehoahaz, a 23-year-old son of Josiah, was crowned in Jerusalem by popular demand, though he was not the oldest (2 Kings 23:30, 31). He seems to have been known as one who would follow his father’s policies, being probably pro-Babylonian as his father had been, which to Pharaoh-Necho meant that he was anti-Egyptian. After consolidating his position in northern Mesopotamia and Syria, Necho decided to punish Judah for interfering with his plans, and accordingly summoned Jehoahaz before him at Riblah, in Syria. This demand and the fact that Jehoahaz obeyed show clearly that Judah must have suffered heavy losses in the battle of Megiddo, and that the country was powerless to resist Necho, who must by now have considered himself the unquestioned lord of Palestine. Necho took the young king,

after he had reigned only three months, and sent him a prisoner to Egypt. In his stead Necho appointed Eliakim, an older brother of Jehoahaz, under the name of Jehoiakim. The new king was apparently known for pro-Egyptian sympathies. A tribute of 100 talents of silver and 1 talent of gold was imposed, and this he exacted from the people (2 Kings 23:32-35).

Jehoiakim (609—598 B.C.) - Jehoiakim's 11 years as king (609-598 B.C.) were marked by gross idolatry and wickedness, which hastened Judah's final downfall. The exact opposite of his pious father, he distinguished himself by various godless acts, even murdering a prophet (2 Kings 23:37; Jeremiah 26:20-23).

Jehoiakim was probably an Egyptian vassal until his third regnal year. In 605 B.C., according to the recently discovered Babylonian Chronicle, Nebuchadnezzar, crown prince of Babylon, was dispatched by his father to fight against the Egyptians in northern Mesopotamia. In two battles, at Carchemish and near Hamath, he decisively defeated the Egyptians, and was able to conquer Syria and Palestine. It must have been while following the defeated Egyptians toward their homeland that Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem and forced Jehoiakim to become a vassal of Babylon, taking a part of the Temple treasure and certain princes as hostages—among them Daniel and his friends (Daniel 1:1-6). News of his father's death sent Nebuchadnezzar back to Babylon by the shortest possible route to take the throne, leaving in the hands of his generals the prisoners already taken during the campaign, with orders to retreat to Mesopotamia (Josephus Contra Apion i. 19). When a king died there was always danger of a revolt at home or of a usurper's attempt to seize the throne. For this reason, Nebuchadnezzar did not want his army fighting in faraway Egypt at a time when it might be urgently needed in Babylonia.

Since Nebuchadnezzar found no opposition at home he could immediately return to the task of bringing under full control the western territories that, as the result of the battles at Carchemish and near Hamath, had fallen into his lap. Hence, we find him campaigning in "Hatti-land," as the Babylonians called Syria and Palestine, during each of the following three years. Resistance must have been light, because the only military action mentioned is the capture and destruction of Ashkelon. His campaigns may have served chiefly to organize the territory and collect the annual tributes.

During these three years of comparative quiet, it would appear that Jehoiakim of Judah remained a loyal vassal of Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kings 24:1). However, since the annual tribute to Babylon rested heavily upon the land, he felt a strong urge to switch his allegiance to Egypt, which was regaining strength. This directed Nebuchadnezzar's attention toward Egypt, the chief cause of the troubles with his vassals. A battle fought with the Egyptian army in Kislev (November–December), 601 B.C., seems to have ended in a draw, with heavy losses, because the Babylonians withdrew. The records tell us that Nebuchadnezzar remained at home during the following year and built up a new army before venturing out on a new campaign toward the end of 599 B.C. Yet in the meantime he allowed several of his western vassal nations, aided by some of his own troops, to raid and harass Judah (2 Kings 24:2). At that time, 3,023 Jews were deported to Babylon (Jeremiah 52:28). In December, 598, Chaldean troops probably were able to take Jerusalem. Once more Temple treasures were taken to Babylon (2 Chronicles 36:7). The king was placed in fetters, to be taken to Babylon (2 Chronicles 36:6) and punished for his rebellion. But this plan was apparently not carried out. Jehoiakim seems to have died before he could be deported, either from rough treatment at the hands of the Chaldeans or from natural causes. His body was cast outside the city gates and lay there exposed to heat and cold for several days before it received a disgraceful burial—like

that “of an ass” (Jeremiah 22:18, 19; see also 2 Kings 24:6; 2 Chronicles 36:6; Jeremiah 36:30; Josephus Antiquities x. 6. 3).

Jehoiachin (598/97 B.C.) - Jehoiakim was succeeded by his 18-year-old son, Jehoiachin, who reigned only three months (598/97 B.C.). It is not known why Nebuchadnezzar proceeded to Jerusalem to take the new king prisoner. In any case the records inform us that Nebuchadnezzar’s army, shortly after Jehoiachin’s accession, began another western campaign. When Nebuchadnezzar arrived at Jerusalem, Jehoiachin surrendered himself, his mother, and his whole staff on Adar 2 (approximately March 16), 597, a specific date established by the Babylonian Chronicle. Nebuchadnezzar took Jehoiachin to Babylon as hostage and made his uncle, Zedekiah, king in his stead. Also he now transported to Babylonia all the remaining vessels of the Temple treasure, 7,000 soldiers, and all the skilled craftsmen he found. The latter would be useful in his extensive building enterprises. (See 2 Kings 24:8-16.)

Jehoiachin, still considered the king of Judah, was more or less only a hostage in Babylon. This conclusion is based on the fact that there was agitation in Judah and among the captives in Babylon, who expected Jehoiachin to be returned to the throne and the sacred vessels to be brought back (Jeremiah 28:3, 4; and 29). Since the Jews in Babylon could not date events according to the regnal years of Jehoiachin without offending the Babylonians, they apparently labeled such events—as Ezekiel did—by the years of his captivity (Ezekiel 1:2; 40:1).

These conclusions find some confirmation in archeological discoveries. Three clay jar handles unearthed at Beth-shemesh and Tell Beit Mirsim (probably Debir) all bear the imprint of the same stamp seal, “Belonging to Eliakim, steward of Jehoiachin.” These finds seem to indicate that Jehoiachin’s property had not been confiscated, but that it was administered in his absence by his steward. Furthermore, several tablets found in the ruins of Babylon, dated in the year 592 B.C.— five years after Jehoiachin’s surrender—contain lists of food-stuff provided by the royal storehouse for certain persons who were fed by the king. Among them Jehoiachin is repeatedly mentioned as “king of Judah,” together with five of his sons and their tutor Kenaiah. These facts—that Jehoiachin is called king, that he received 20 times as much ration as any other person mentioned in these records, and that any reference to his imprisonment is lacking—seem to indicate that he was held by Nebuchadnezzar for the time, in anticipation of the day when he should be restored to his throne, if and when conditions in Judah might make such a course of action advisable.

At a later time, either in connection with the incidents described in Jeremiah 29 or at the time of Zedekiah’s rebellion, Jehoiachin was definitely imprisoned. This imprisonment continued until the 37th year of his captivity, when Nebuchadnezzar’s son, Amel-Marduk, the Biblical Evil-merodach, released and exonerated him (2 Kings 25:27-30). This event, however, falls in the period of the Exile and is therefore not within the limits of this book.

Zedekiah (597-586 B.C.) - When Nebuchadnezzar put Jehoiachin’s uncle on the throne of Judah, he changed his name from Mattaniah, “gift of Jehovah,” to Zedekiah, “righteousness of Jehovah.” He probably did this so that this name might be a continual reminder to the king of his solemn oath of loyalty to Nebuchadnezzar, by his own God Jehovah (2 Chronicles 36:13; Ezekiel 17:15-19). Zedekiah, however, was a weak character; and although he was sometimes inclined to do right, he allowed himself to be swayed from the right path by popular demands, as the history of his reign clearly shows.

For a number of years—according to Josephus, for eight years (Antiquities x. 7. 3)—Zedekiah remained loyal to Babylonia. Once he sent an embassy to Nebuchadnezzar to assure him of his fidelity (Jeremiah 29:3-7). In his fourth year (594/593 B.C.) he made a journey to Babylon (Jeremiah 51:59), being perhaps summoned to renew his oath of loyalty or possibly to take part in the ceremonies described in Daniel 3. Later on, being under the constant pressure of his subjects, particularly the princes, who urged him to seek the aid of Egypt against Babylon, Zedekiah made an alliance with the Egyptians (see Jeremiah 37:6-10; 38:14-28). In doing so he completely disregarded the strong warnings of the prophet Jeremiah. This alliance was probably made after Psamtik II had personally appeared in Palestine 590 B.C. and given all kinds of assurances and promises of help.

Nebuchadnezzar, who had prudently refrained from attacking Egypt, was, nevertheless, not willing to lose any of his western possessions to Egypt. He therefore marched against Judah as soon as Zedekiah's perfidy became apparent. Taking all cities of the country, he practically repeated what Sennacherib had done a century earlier, systematically devastating the whole land. From this unhappy period, come the famous Lachish Letters (see on Jeremiah 34:7) recently found in the excavations of that city. These letters, written in ink on broken bits of pottery, were sent by an officer in charge of an outpost between Azekah and Lachish to the commandant of the latter fortress. They vividly illustrate the deplorable conditions prevailing in the country at that time, and in many details corroborate statements made by Jeremiah, who lived in Jerusalem then.

The siege of Jerusalem began in earnest on January 15, 588 B.C. (2 Kings 25:1), and lasted until July 19, 586 B.C. (2 Kings 25:2; Jeremiah 39:2), when the Chaldean army finally broke through the walls into the city, where unspeakable famine conditions prevailed. Once the 30-month-long siege was interrupted briefly by the unsuccessful attempt of the Egyptian army to defeat the Babylonians (Jeremiah 37:5). When the breakthrough came Zedekiah made an attempt to escape. In the confused fighting that followed the breakthrough, he managed to leave the city and reach the plain of Jericho, but was overtaken there. Carried to Nebuchadnezzar's headquarters at Riblah, Zedekiah saw his sons killed; then his eyes were put out and he was sent to Babylon in chains. His chief ministers were executed and all others carried away (2 Kings 25:4-7, 19-21; Jeremiah 52:10).

Jerusalem was systematically looted and then destroyed. The walls were torn down, and the Temple, the palaces, and all other houses were burned to the ground. The fire may have raged for three days in the unhappy city—August 15-18, 586 B.C.—as the two dates of 2 Kings 25:82 and Jeremiah 52:12, 13, seem to indicate. Most of the Jews were carried as captives to Babylonia, but some of the poorest of the country were left behind. Nebuchadnezzar appointed over them as governor a Jew, Gedaliah, at Mizpah (2 Kings 25:22; 2 Chronicles 36:20).

Gedaliah as Governor (586 B.C.) - Gedaliah seems to have served as governor for only a short time, although the lack of a year date in 2 Kings 25:25 leaves it uncertain how long after the fall of Jerusalem he was assassinated. Jeremiah, who had been a prisoner in Jerusalem at the fall of the city, was released by Nebuchadnezzar's army commander and joined Gedaliah at Mizpah. Also, several Jewish field commanders who had escaped from the debacle found their way to Mizpah. One of them, Ishmael, a relative of Zedekiah, a fanatical royalist, killed Gedaliah, his staff, and the Chaldean garrison of Mizpah, and tried to join the Ammonites, probably planning to continue the fight against Nebuchadnezzar with their help. This plan was thwarted by Johanan, another general of Zedekiah, who intercepted Ishmael and

liberated his captives. Ishmael escaped with eight men to the Ammonites, but Johanan and the remnants of the army that were with him, fearing Nebuchadnezzar, went to Egypt and forced Jeremiah and Baruch to join them. Thus ends Judah's pre-exilic history.

CHAPTER SIX

THE HEBREW CALENDAR IN OLD TESTAMENT TIMES

Origin of the Hebrew Calendar

Those who have Jewish neighbors know that they celebrate their New Year's Day, which they call Rosh Hashana, in the autumn. If we ask a rabbi the date of Rosh Hashana, he will explain that it is the first of the Jewish month Tishri, but that it falls on different dates in our September or October in successive years, since it comes approximately at the new moon. The reason for this is that the Jews have a lunar calendar, now modified in form but originally reckoned by the moon. In ancient times, the appearance of the new crescent after sunset, following several moonless nights, marked the beginning of the first day of each new month. The rabbi may explain further that the New Year season lasts through Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement), on the 10th of the month, the most solemn day of the whole year, when Jews attend special synagogue services.

If we consult the Bible on these points, we find that New Year's Day (called the Blowing of Trumpets) and the Day of Atonement are the 1st and 10th of the 7th month (Levites 23:24-32), not of the 1st month; and that the Passover, which always comes in the spring, is in the 1st month (Levites 23:5). We find the answer to this puzzling situation, and to other problems, by a study of the origin and nature of the Jewish calendar as set forth in the Bible and other ancient records.

The early Hebrew calendar as given in the Bible was admirably adapted to the needs of an ancient people who had no clocks, no printed calendars, and, as far as we know, no astronomy. It was based on simple principles—the day beginning with sunset, the week counted by sevens continuously, the month beginning with the crescent moon, the year regulated by the harvest season.

Of course such a calendar must be adjusted to keep the year in step with the seasons, but so also must our solar calendar, used in most of the world today. The difference is that our year is only about a fourth of a day less than the true year of the seasons, determined by the sun, whereas the common lunar year of 12 "moon" months is 10 or 11 days shorter than the true solar year. We adjust our solar-calendar year by letting the error run for 4 years, until a whole day is accumulated, which we add as the 29th of February. In the lunar calendar the larger error of 10 or 11 days is allowed to run until a month is accumulated; by adding a 13th month every 2 or 3 years (7 times in 19 years) this difference is compensated for.

The Israelites did not possess the advanced astronomical knowledge required for the development of the modern solar calendar with its leap-year adjustments, but God instituted at the Exodus a simple yet efficient method of keeping the calendar year from moving permanently out of step with the seasons of the natural year.

The Hebrews inherited the elements of the calendar from their Semitic ancestors, who from time immemorial had reckoned their months by the moon. To Abram, presumably, as to his Mesopotamian neighbors in Ur, each new month, and consequently the first day of the month, began with the evening of

the visible crescent moon, and his descendants would have no reason to change the practice. Even when they were in Egypt there was no need of their abandoning their evening-to-evening day and their lunar month for the 365-day Egyptian solar calendar, for these bearded Semitic shepherds, who were an abomination to the Egyptians, lived apart in Goshen and followed their own customs.

Though they largely disregarded the Sabbath, they undoubtedly preserved the knowledge of this weekly holy day and of the lunar month—for even a slave brick maker can count seven days and can keep track of the return of the crescent. But it is quite possible that they became confused as to which new moon was to mark the beginning of the calendar year. If they had retained the method of adding a month periodically, as was done in Mesopotamia by the Babylonians and Assyrians, we have no record of it. Indeed, there is no mention of the practice in the Bible, although it is evident that the Mosaic calendar implies it.

Either because they had lost track of the year, or because God wished to cut them off from the heathen worship associated with the Canaanite year that began in the autumn, God definitely pointed out the spring month from which they were to reckon the year. Shortly before the Exodus He instructed Moses that “this month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you” (Exodus 12:2). There was no systematic code of calendar rules, but the civil and ceremonial laws given through Moses contain incidental references to the elements of the calendar.

The Elements of the Hebrew Calendar

The Day From Evening to Evening - The day began for the Hebrew in the evening, as we know from the rule that the 10th day of the 7th month was to begin on the evening of the 9th (Levites 23:32), that is, when the sun set at the close of the 9th day. The fact that the day ended at sunset is shown in the directions for purification: One who was ceremonially unclean 7 days went through certain purifying ceremonies on the 7th and was clean again “at even” (Numbers 19:16, 19); and one who was unclean until even was said to become clean “when the sun is down” (Levites 22:6, 7). Obviously then, if the 7th day of a period ends at sunset, then all the days of the period must end at sunset.

The Week Marked Off by the Sabbath - The week was divinely marked out, even before the giving of the law, by the double portion of manna on the 6th day and the withholding of it on the 7th (Exodus 16). It was the only element of the calendar enshrined in the Decalogue, for the Sabbath has a moral aspect that is not connected with mere dates and calendars. It is a sign of allegiance to the Creator, and it was revealed to Israel as part of the moral law, and as a symbol of sanctification (Exodus 31:13), not only of God's power to create, but also of His power to re-create. Therefore the week is independent of all calendars. Its purpose is not to reckon dates. Indeed, it is incommensurate with any calendar month or year.

The Month Regulated by the Moon - The two Hebrew words for “month” are (1) *yerech*, related to *yareach*, “moon,” and (2) *chodesh*, literally “new one,” referring to the “new moon,” the “day of the new moon,” and thus a lunar “month,” from the root *chadash*, “to renew.” *Yareach* is used infrequently, the common word being *chodesh*. The month in which the Israelites left Egypt was set as the first of the year. This was called *Abib*, the “month of ears” of grain. It was the spring month of the opening Palestinian harvest, later called *Nisan*, as it is known to the present day (see Exodus 23:15; 34:18; Deuteronomy 16:1;

Esther 3:7). This was evidently a lunar month to which the Hebrews were already accustomed, because nothing is said of instituting a new kind of month. If the change had been from a solar to a lunar type, some sort of instructions as to how to reckon the new month would have been necessary. The innovation was merely that “this month” was to be the first, as it had presumably not been before.

The first of the month was considered a special day, celebrated by the blowing of trumpets and by extra sacrifices (Numbers 10:10; 28:11-14). New moons are frequently mentioned along with Sabbaths and festivals (2 Kings 4:23; Isaiah 1:13, 14; 66:23, etc.).

That the month began with the new moon is shown by an incident in the time of David. After Saul had sought his life, David tested the king’s attitude toward him by absenting himself from the royal table on a new moon feast. Saul said nothing on the new moon, but his wrath burst forth when David’s place was empty again “on the morrow, which was the second day of the month” (1 Samuel 20:24-27). Obviously, then, the first day of the month, as would be expected in a lunar calendar, was the new moon.

Pre-Exilic Names of the Months - We have very little information about the Jewish months before the Babylonian Exile. There were 12 months (1 Kings 4:7), but we do not even know their names, except for the 1st month Abib (Exodus 13:4; 23:15; 34:18; Deuteronomy 16:1), the 2nd month Zif (1 Kings 6:1), the 7th month Ethanim (1 Kings 8:2), and the 8th month Bul (1 Kings 6:38). These were evidently Canaanite names; Phoenician inscriptions have been found that mention Ethanim and Bul. This is not surprising, since the Hebrew and Canaanite languages were closely related. More often the Bible refers to the months by number, previous to the Exile, rather than by name (Exodus 12:2; 16:1; 19:1; 1 Kings 12:32; Jeremiah 28:1; 39:2).

Length of the Month - Nothing is said of the number of days in a month. In later times, the lengths of the months and the intervals between the 13-month years were calculated by astronomical rules and fixed in a systematized calendar. But in the beginning the months must have been determined by the direct observation of the moon. Since the phases of the moon repeat themselves every 29 1/2 days, approximately, the crescent would reappear in the evening at the close of the 29th or 30th of the month. Ordinarily the months would alternate 30 and 29 days, but this was not always true. There are not only minor variations in the motion of the moon that affect the uniformity of the intervals, but also weather conditions that sometimes prevent the visibility of the crescent. We are told in later Jewish writings that it was the custom to look for the moon at the close of the 29th. If it was visible in the evening sky after sunset, the day then beginning was reckoned as the first of the new month; if it was not yet visible, or was obscured by clouds, that day was the 30th. The day following the 30th always began the new month, even if the moon was still obscured by clouds. Thus, there could be two or even three 30-day months in succession, although this was not usual.

The Moslems of the present day count their months by the observed moon (except that they use the Gregorian calendar also in their contacts with the Western world), and thus in isolated districts the lunar date may be one day behind or ahead of the date in a neighboring village. But the Jews, living in a relatively small area, seem to have had a centralized system controlled by the priests at Jerusalem. There are traditional accounts of witnesses reporting the appearance of the crescent, and of fire signals heralding the beginning of the new month from hilltop to hilltop throughout the land, so that all Israel could begin the month together.

In later times, certainly in the revised form of the calendar instituted some centuries after the time of Christ, the 6 months from Nisan through Elul ran 30 and 29 days alternately, and any adjustments required by the moon's variation were made in the other part of the year, so as to leave the intervals between the festivals always the same. Such adjustments would not have been made while the beginning of each month still depended on the observation of the crescent. David's remark that "to morrow is the new moon" (1 Samuel 20:5) does not necessarily indicate that the months were fixed in advance by calculation. David could have estimated it from the preceding month without being more than one day off, and he may have been speaking on the 30th, which would necessarily be the last day of the month. We have no way of knowing when any system of regular calculation came in, but it was probably a late development. The dates on clay-tablet documents from Babylonia, written many centuries after David, show no fixed sequence of 30-day and 29-day months, and Babylonian computations made in advance for a specific month often left a days uncertainty.

Lunisolar Year - The number of months in a year was not specifically mentioned in the Law (for a later period, see 1 Kings 4:7), though that was probably taken for granted from the beginning, for both Egypt and Mesopotamia had 12 months. The 13th lunar month was always one of the 12 doubled. But 12 lunar months end approximately 11 days earlier than a complete solar year reckoned from the same starting point. Hence it would have become evident very early that in a series of uncorrected lunar years (such as the Moslems use to this day), the calendar would move gradually earlier in relation to the seasonal year, at the rate of about 11 days annually. Eventually it would make a complete circuit of the seasons and count an extra year in about 33 solar years, or about 3 years extra in a century. The effect on chronology is obvious. But no known Semitic calendar of ancient times was allowed to run uncorrected. The adjustment was made in Babylonia by the periodic intercalation, or insertion, of an intercalary month every few years—that is, by repeating either the 6th or the 12th month—at first in a rather irregular fashion, later in a 19-year cycle.

Such a lunar calendar, of 12 and 13 months, adjusted in this manner to the solar year, is sometimes called a lunisolar year. It varies within a month in relation to exact dates in the solar calendar. That is why Easter, dated originally from the Passover, and still calculated by a lunar-calendar system, wanders over different dates in our calendar, within the range of about a month. Yet the lunisolar calendar, such as that of the Mesopotamians and the Jews, was nearer correct in a long series of years than the Egyptian solar calendar, which was reckoned as 365 days continuously without a leap year. It is true that a single Egyptian year of 365 days was nearer the true year than a Jewish or Babylonian year of 354 or perhaps 384 days, but the Egyptian calendar never corrected its smaller error, and therefore wandered off a day every 4 years, and accumulated this difference. On the other hand, the lunisolar calendar, with a larger variation each year, periodically corrected itself, so that a given number of Jewish years equaled the number of true solar years in the same period. There could never be an extra Hebrew year in 33 seasonal years, for every Jewish year had a Passover, held in connection with a harvest, and there can be only 33 harvest seasons in 33 years.

The Year Regulated by the Festivals - The Hebrews needed no astronomical cycles to correct their calendar year so long as they kept the Passover as it was prescribed in the Law. Since God wished to give the Israelites a system of annual festivals to teach religious lessons in connection with seasonal events, He provided for a calendar system that would enable them to know in advance the regular times for these gatherings and to observe these feasts at the proper season. This lunar system, similar to that long used in

Mesopotamia, was easy enough to follow by observing the moon. Even the needed periodical correction could be determined in a simple fashion. Upon leaving Egypt, the Israelites had not accumulated a body of astronomical knowledge on which to base a dating system, and God did not give Moses elaborate technical instructions for regulating the calendar. He indicated the “month of ears” as the first month (Abib, or Nisan), and from it the simple directions for the spring festivals provided a rule for an accurate calendar.

The clue to the correction of the lunar year to harmonize with the seasonal year was to be found in the rules that linked the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread with Abib, the “month of ears” (Deuteronomy 16:1; Exodus 23:15; 34:18), and with the opening of the harvest. A sheaf of ripe grain was to be offered as first fruits during the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Levites 23:10-14), after which the new crop of barley could be eaten. Thus, the middle of Abib must not be too early for the beginning of barley harvest, the earliest grain that ripened in Palestine. And further, it must not be too late for the Feast of Weeks to come during the wheat harvest, seven weeks later, for the latter feast was called “the firstfruits of wheat harvest” (Exodus 34:22; cf. Levites 23:15-17; Deuteronomy 16:9, 10). Less specific are the references to the time of the Feast of Ingathering (or Tabernacles), in the 7th month as coming at the end of the harvest after the vintage (see Exodus 23:16; Levites 23:34, 39). But the emphasis is unmistakably placed on the exact timing of the month of Abib in the spring, the month from which all the others are numbered.

The Barley Harvest the Key - In order to keep Abib in alignment with the barley harvest, it was occasionally necessary to insert a 13th month, as often as the error had accumulated (during two or three years) sufficiently to move the 1st month too early for the grain to be ripe at the Passover season. A hypothetical example will illustrate this. The Israelites crossed the Jordan and observed their first Passover in Canaan in the time of harvest (Joshua 4:19; 5:10-12). The next year the feast would have shifted about 11 days earlier in relation to ripening time, and by the third year about 22 days earlier. By the third (certainly by the fourth) year Abib 16 would have moved out of range of the barley harvest, so that a sheaf of ripe grain could not be offered. Thus in that year the month that would have begun the new year would be a 13th month instead, later called Veadar (Heb.wa’adar, literally, “and-Adar”), a second Adar; then the following new moon would begin Nisan (See note) late enough for ripe barley on the 16th. There is no proof of the use of the 13th month as early as Joshua’s day, but something like that must have happened if the Israelites followed the wave-sheaf rule literally.

NOTE: Since the name Veadar has been introduced here for the 13th month, the term Nisan may as well be employed hereafter for the first month, as well as the other names that were taken over from the Babylonians after the return from captivity. The Bible more often designates the months by number only, and mentions but four pre-exilic month names. Therefore it is better to avoid burdening the reader with more than one name for a single month, and to employ from here on the better-known names that have been in use in Jewry from the Exile down to the present day. It must be kept in mind, however, that these later names were not actually used in the period covered by this chapter.

Later Jewish tradition tells us that the priests responsible for the decision examined the crop in the 12th month, and that whenever it appeared that the barley would not be ripe by the 16th of the following month, they announced that the next month would be called Veadar, and that the month after this second Adar would be Nisan, the 1st month.

Many authorities hold that throughout the Biblical period the Jewish month was based on direct observation of the moon, and that the insertion of the second Adar was determined by the Judean barley

harvest. Others find evidence in the postexilic period for the method of arbitrary calculation, such as a regular scheme of 30-day and 29-day months, and the 19-year cycle. Whenever computation was introduced, it was probably checked and regulated by observation for a long time afterward.

Thus, the years instituted at the Exodus began with Abib, or Nisan, which was evidently to be kept in step with the barley harvest by the insertion of a 13th month every two or three years.

The Religious Festivals

Passover - The series of religious festivals (see on Levites 23) at the basis of the Jewish calendar began in the first month with the Passover (see on Exodus 12:1-11; Levites 23:5; Deuteronomy 16:1-7). On the 10th of the month, a lamb was selected for each family or group, and penned up until its slaughter on the 14th. Preceding the 14th, all traces of leaven were removed from the houses, preparatory to the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Then on the afternoon of the 14th, literally, “between the two evenings” (Deuteronomy 16:6), the Passover lambs were slain. With the establishment of the Temple, all sacrifices, including the Passover lamb, were required to be offered there (Deuteronomy 16:5, 6). Every male Jew over 12 years of age was required to attend, and many women and children came voluntarily. Thousands of pilgrims gathered at Jerusalem annually for the Passover and the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread that followed. (The term “Passover” was often used of the whole period.)

Feast of Unleavened Bread - The 15th of the 1st month was the first of the 7 days of unleavened bread (Exodus 23:15; 34:18; Levites 23:6-14; Deuteronomy 16:3-8), sometimes called the first day of the Passover (Ezekiel 45:21). It was a festival sabbath, on which no work was to be done (Levites 23:6, 7; for the term “sabbath,” cf. verses 24, 32). This was not a weekly Sabbath, falling on the 7th day of the week; rather, it fell on a fixed day of the month, the 15th of Nisan, and consequently on a different day of the week each year. It was the first of seven ceremonial sabbaths connected with the annual round of festivals, which were distinctly specified to be “beside the sabbaths of the Lord” (Levites 23:38). These rest days were part of the ceremonial law; hence, unlike the 7th-day memorial of creation, were “a shadow of things to come” (Colossians 2:17), types to be fulfilled in Christ.

On “the morrow after the sabbath”—the festival sabbath after the Passover—that is, the 16th of Nisan, came the ceremony of the wave sheaf, the first fruits of the barley crop. Until this ceremony was performed, it was unlawful to eat of the new grain. The Feast of Unleavened Bread ended on the 21st with another festival sabbath (Levites 23:8).

Pentecost, or the Feast of Weeks - Seven weeks from the day of the wave sheaf, early in the 3rd month (later called Sivan), came the Feast of Weeks, celebrating the wheat harvest by the presentation of loaves in the Temple (see Levites 23:15-21; Deuteronomy 16:9-12). This was later called Pentecost, because it came 50 days (inclusive) after the offering of the wave sheaf (Levites 23:16). This was another ceremonial sabbath, and a feast that required the attendance of every male Hebrew (Deuteronomy 16:16). It is generally reckoned, as occurring on the 6th day of the 3rd month (Sivan), for that was the 50th day (inclusive) from Nisan 16 whenever the first 2 months had 30 and 29 days respectively, as was probably most often the case, and always the case after the number of days in each month became fixed. See also Exodus 23:16; Levites 23:16.

Blowing of Trumpets: the New Year (Modern Rosh Hashana) - Six months after the Passover the series of autumn festivals began with the Blowing of Trumpets on the 1st of the 7th month (Tishri). The day, later called Rosh Hashana, the “beginning of the year,” was a festival sabbath (Levites 23:24, 25; Numbers 29:1). It celebrated the beginning of the civil year. This New Year’s Day was marked not only by the blowing of the trumpets but also by special sacrifices, almost double in number compared with the regular new-moon sacrifices (Numbers 29:1-6; cf. chapter 28:11-15; see also on Exodus 23:16; Numbers 29:1).

Yet the months always continued to be numbered from Nisan, in accordance with the command of God at the Exodus, for the alignment of the year with the seasons depended on the Nisan new moon as located in relation to the barley harvest. But the civil and agricultural year, and the sabbatical and jubilee years as well, began by the older reckoning, with Tishri, the 7th month.

If it seems strange that the year should be in any way considered as beginning with the 7th month, it should be remembered that in modern times we have the custom of beginning a fiscal year in some other month than January—often with July, our 7th month, and we date such a year as opening, for example, on “7(month)/1/1954.” So the Jews to this day celebrate their New Year’s Day on Tishri 1, at the beginning of the 7th month.

Day of Atonement - The 10th day of the 7th month, the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), was and still is the most solemn day of the year. It was not only a ceremonial sabbath but also a strict fast day (Levites 23:27-32). According to the Babylonian Talmud, (see note) Tishri 1 (New Year’s Day) symbolizes the judgment:

NOTE: The Talmud is a collection of Jewish traditions compiled between the 2nd and 5th centuries A.D. It consists of two parts: (1) the Mishnah, a codification of Jewish oral law, divided by subject into tractates, completed about the end of the 2nd century, and (2) the Gemara, a comment, exposition, and debate on the various sections of the Mishnah. Work on the Talmud was carried on at both Jerusalem and Babylon. The Jerusalem Talmud was completed in the 4th century, and the Babylonian Talmud, the more complete of the two, about a century later.

“Mishnah. At four seasons [Divine] judgment is passed on the world: at Passover in respect of produce; at Pentecost in respect of fruit; at New Year all creatures pass before him [God] like children of Maron. ...

“Gemara. ... It has been taught: ‘All are judged on New Year and their doom is sealed on the Day of Atonement. ...’

“R. Kruspedai said in the name of R. Johanan: Three books are opened [in heaven] on New Year, one for the thoroughly wicked, one for the thoroughly righteous, and one for the intermediate. The thoroughly righteous are forthwith inscribed definitively in the book of life; the thoroughly wicked are forthwith inscribed definitively in the book of death; the doom of the intermediate is suspended from New Year till the Day of Atonement; if they deserve well, they are inscribed in the book of life; if they do not deserve well, they are inscribed in the book of death” (The Babylonian Talmud, Soncino English translation, tractate Rosh Hashanah, 16a, pp. 57, 58; brackets in the original.)

The Jews still regard the first ten days of the year, ending with the Day of Atonement, as somewhat a continuation of the New Year observance, an extra period of grace in which the sins of the preceding year can still be forgiven, a sort of extension of the deadline for closing one’s account with heaven. Even in our time, the Day of Atonement is considered the day of judgment, since it offers the final opportunity for

repentance. In the ancient ceremony of the 10th day, the sanctuary was cleansed of all the sins of the preceding year, which were thus symbolically removed forever from the congregation (Levites 16), and on these days the last opportunity was given for repentance. Anyone who was not right with God on that day was cut off forever (see also Exodus 30:10; Levites 16; 23:27, 29).

On the Day of Atonement the trumpets blew to usher in the 50th year, or the jubilee (Levites 25:9, 10), and presumably the sabbatical years also.

Feast of Ingathering, or Tabernacles - Then came the joyous Feast of Ingathering, or Tabernacles, celebrating the completion of the agricultural cycle with the vintage and olive harvest. During this festival, the people lived in “tabernacles,” or booths, of green branches in commemoration of their earlier wanderings as nomadic tent dwellers (Levites 23:34-43, Deuteronomy 16:13-15). This feast began with a ceremonial sabbath on the 15th of Tishri, and lasted 7 days; it was followed by another such sabbath, a “holy convocation,” on the 22nd (it might be called the octave of Tabernacles). The Feast of Ingathering was the third of the annual feasts at which all the males of Israel were required to gather at Jerusalem (see Exodus 23:16, 17; Exodus 34:22, 23).

The tabulation gives for each month the time of its beginning, the dates of the feasts, and the principal seasonal events. For example, the first month, Abib (postexilic Nisan), begins at the new moon of March or April; on the 1st, 10th, 14th, etc., of that lunar month, respectively, occur the new moon, the selection of the lamb, the Passover, etc. and that month marks, approximately, the season of the latter rains, the barley harvest, etc.

HEBREW MONTHS, FESTIVALS, AND SEASONS

Lunar Months	Begin At New Moon of	Days of Lunar Months	Festivals	Approximate Agricultural Seasons
1. Abib (Nisan)* Exodus 23:15, Nehemiah 2:1	March or April	1	New Moon	Latter rains (Joel 2:23)
		10	Passover lamb selected. Exodus 12:3	
		14	PASSOVER killed “in the evening”; eaten “that night,” beginning of 15th. Exodus 12:6-8	

		15†	UNLEAVENED BREAD begins. Leviticus 23:6, 7	
		16	Wave sheaf offered. Leviticus 23:10-14	Barley harvest; new crop may be eaten
		21	Last day of Unleavened Bread. Leviticus 23:8	Dry seasons begins
2 Zif [Iyyar] 1 Kings 6:1	April or May	1	New Moon	
		14	Passover for those unclean in 1st month. Numbers 9:10, 11	Wheat ripe in lowlands
3. (Sivan) (Esther 8:9)	May or June	1	New Moon	Early figs
		6	PENTECOST, or Feast of Weeks.	Hot weather
			Waves loaves offered, 50th day from Nisan 16. Levites 23:15-21	Wheat harvest, general
4. [Tammuz]	June or July	1	New Moon	Wheat harvest in mountains
				First grapes
5. [Ab]	July or Aug	1	New Moon	Olives in lowlands
6. (Elul) (Nehemiah 6:15)	Aug or Sept	1	New Moon	Dates, figs
				Vintage
7. Ethanim [Tishri] 1 Kings 8:2	Sept or Oct	1	BLOWING OF TRUMPETS, Rosh Hashana, or New Year. Levites	

			23:24, 25	
		10	DAY OF ATONEMENT, or Yom Kippur. Levites 23:27-32; Levites 16	
		15-21	FEAST OF INGATHERING or Tabernacles. Levites 23:34-43	End of harvest
		22	Holy convocation. Levites 23:36, 39, Numbers 29:12, 35	Former or early rains Plowing begins
8. Bul [Marheshvan or Hesvan] 1 Kings 6:38	Oct or Nov	1	New Moon	Barley and wheat sown
9. (Chisleu or Kislev) (Nehemiah 1:1)	Nov or Dec	1	New Moon	Winter rains
10. (Tebeth) (Esther 2:16)	Dec or Jan	1	New Moon	Lowlands green
11. (Shebat) (Zechariah 1:7)	Jan or Feb	1	New Moon	
12. (Adar) (Esther 3:7)	Feb or March	1	New Moon	Orange ripe in lowlands
			Purim) Esther 9:21-28	Barley ripe at Jericho
[13. Second Adar 7 times in 19 years]	March	[14,15	Purim in 7 out of 19 years]	

† Annual ceremonial sabbaths (cf. Colossians 2:16, 17) in italics.

* The first day of Abib always came in our March or April, and coincided with the new moon. Similarly, the month of Zif began in April or May. The other months of the Hebrew calendar follow the same pattern.

Year Reckonings

Spring and Autumn Beginnings of the Year - The Canaanite calendar begin in the autumn, as did the Jewish civil year; therefore we may assume either that the patriarchs used it while in Canaan, before Jacob and his family went to Egypt, or that the Israelites adopted it from their neighbors after the Exodus. The first alternative seems more likely, since Moses himself refers to an autumn reckoning in the book of Exodus, as will be seen. The Hebrews combined the numbering of the months from the spring, as instituted at the Exodus, with the year beginning in the fall, and thus had a double reckoning, the “sacred” year beginning with the first month and the civil year beginning with the 7th month.

Josephus says that the ancient reckoning was from the fall, but “Moses, however, appointed Nisan, that is to say Xanthicus [the corresponding Macedonian month name], as the first month for the festivals, because it was in this month that he brought the Hebrews out of Egypt; he also reckoned this month as the selling and buying and other ordinary affairs he preserved the ancient order” (Antiquities i 3. 3. Loeb ed.).

“The End of the Year” in the Autumn - Even in the book of Exodus, which designates the spring month of Abib as the first month of the (“sacred”) year, there are evidences for the beginning of the older and more familiar year in the autumn. These are references to its “end” in that season. The difference, however, is not great, since any year begins at the same point at which the preceding one ends. The Feast of Ingathering, or Tabernacles, in the 7th month (Tishri) is said to come “at the year’s end” (Exodus 34:22). Again it is referred to as “the feast of ingathering, which is in the end of the year, when thou hast gathered in thy labours out of the field” (Exodus 23:16). (See NOTE) Since it celebrated the bounties of the agricultural year that had just closed, it was identified as coming near the end of the year, although it actually began 15 days after the end, in the early days of the civil year that began on Tishri 1.

NOTE: The two words for “end” in these verses are tequpha, meaning a “circle,” “rotation,” “completion,” and se’th, meaning a “going forth.” The second is more exact, for the 7th month of the religious year is the “going forth” of the new civil year. In contrast to the “going forth” of the year in the autumn, the spring is called the “return” (teshubah, from shub, “to turn back”) of the year (1 Kings 20:22, 26). If the beginning of the year is thought of as its going forth on the circuit of the months, then the turning point, at which it begins to return to its starting point, is of course halfway round the circuit, six months later, in the spring. That this turning point is meant to indicate the spring is shown by another example of the word teshubah (2 Samuel 11:1). Here the phrase “after the year was expired” is a less literal translation of the Hebrew “at the return of the year,” and is defined as “the time when kings go forth to battle.” It is well known that military campaigns in the ancient Near East were started almost exclusively in the spring and carried on in summer, in the dry season, when transportation difficulties were at a minimum. We find ancient records of the annual campaigns of the rulers of Egypt, Assyria, and Babylonia. Thus both the “going forth” (autumn) and the “return” (spring) of the year are consistent in referring to the fall as the starting point.

Agricultural Year - In Palestine and neighboring lands, the agricultural year has always begun in the autumn. After the spring grass has been parched and the soil baked by the long, rainless summer, the autumn rains moisten the soil for planting. This is the early rain, beginning perhaps in October and increasing in November. The wet season lasts through the winter ending with the “latter rain” of spring, which matures the grain (see Deuteronomy 11:14; Jeremiah 5:24; Hosea 6:3; Joel 2:23). The barley harvest in Palestine begins in the middle or end of April, and that of wheat comes in the next month,

followed by summer fruits, then grapes and olives in the late summer and fall. Note that from April/May to October there is dry weather for the successive harvests, as is shown by the following tabulation from Ellsworth Huntington, *Palestine and its Transformation* (London: Constable and Company, Ltd., 1911), page 34.

The minute fractions of an inch listed between May and October show that the scant showers thus represented by these averages come so infrequently that these months may be considered actually dry.

Average Rainfall at Jerusalem, in Inches

January	6.41	May	0.25	September	0.03
February	5.05	June	0.008	October	0.37
March	4.18	July	0.00	November	2.38
April	1.60	August	0.004	December	5.53
Annual total 25.8					

The only actual calendar document that comes from the pre-exilic period of Israel is a stone plaque from the century in which Solomon lived. It was found in Gezer, a city that the king of Egypt took from the Canaanites and presented to his daughter, Solomon's wife. Written on this bit of limestone is a summary of an agricultural calendar, beginning in the fall. This "Gezer calendar" does not give month names, but lists the main activities of the farmer's year month by month.

Civil Year Reckoned From Tishri - Since the whole seasonal cycle of nature was regarded as beginning anew in the autumn with the return of the life giving rains, the basic idea of the new year seems to have centered in the fall. This made it inevitable that the civil year was thought of as beginning with Tishri, even though the months were always numbered from Nisan. The significance of Nisan stems from the fact that the whole alignment of the calendar year with the seasons was determined by the placing of the first month at the time of the barley harvest. It was logical to number as first, the month that followed the inserted 13th month, for in that way the sequence of numbers would never be interrupted. But the emphasis given the 1st of Tishri as the principal beginning of the year is evidenced by the blowing of trumpets, by the special sacrifices, surpassing those of Nisan 1, and by the connection of that day with the day of judgment.

Regnal Years of Kings Reckoned From the Fall - In the time of the Hebrew kings the customary method of designating the years for dating purposes was to number them in series through each king's reign. The formula for a date line was: "on the ___ of the ___ month of the ___ year of King ___." There is evidence that these regnal years were reckoned from the autumn, presumably Tishri 1, in the united Hebrew kingdom (in the reign of Solomon), and afterward in the southern kingdom of Judah, in the time of Josiah; on the other hand, the spring year appears to have been employed in the northern kingdom of Israel. The usage of Israel is not indicated directly in the Bible narrative, but it seems to be a reasonable

deduction from the synchronism between the successive reigns of the two kingdoms as recorded in the books of Kings.

Immediately after the captivity, there is rather inconclusive evidence for a spring reckoning of regnal years after the Babylonian fashion, but in the time of the re-establishment of the Jewish commonwealth and the revival of a national spirit under Ezra and Nehemiah, we find direct evidence of the autumn beginning of the regnal year. The regnal years used in dating were reckoned as they had been under the kingdom of Judah, but in the name of the Persian kings, whose subjects the Jews now were.

Sabbatical and Jubilee Years - One of the distinctive features of the Hebrew laws was the provision for letting the land rest, that is, lie fallow, every 7th year. Just as the 7th day was the weekly Sabbath for man, the 7th year, at the end of a “week” of years, was a sabbath of rest to the land, when there was to be no sowing or reaping (Levites 25:2-7, 20-22). The 7th year was also the “year of release,” for the remission of debts (Deuteronomy 15:1-15). Then, after 7 “weeks” of years, the 50th year was the jubilee, when not only were all Israelite slaves to be released, but all lands sold during the period (with certain exceptions) were to revert to the original owners of their heirs (Levites 25:8-17, 23-34, 47-55). The purpose of this was to keep the family inheritances intact, so that the rich could never buy up the land and leave a landless class. Authorities differ as to whether the 50th year was added to the and leave a landless class. Authorities differ as to whether the 50th year was added to the 50th year was added to the 49, or whether it was, by inclusive count, also the 1st year of the next cycle.

The 50th year was specifically mentioned as beginning in the autumn. The 7th year, though not so specified, was obviously similar, not only because it was in the same series as the 50th, but because a year in which there was no sowing or reaping must necessarily coincide with the agricultural year. The trumpets were blown to announce the jubilee on the Day of Atonement, the 10th of the 7th month (Levites 25:9). Since there is no logical connection between the jubilee year and the Day of Atonement ritual, it is probable that the later rabbis were right in saying that these years coincided with the civil calendar year, beginning on the 1st of Tishri. The provisions of the jubilee, involving the restoration of property and slaves, went into operation at the end of the 10th of Tishri instead of the 1st, because the first 10 days of the year were given over to New Year observances. That is, the jubilee began when the regular business of the civil year opened, on the day that began with the evening at the close of the Day of Atonement, the 10th of Tishri.

Varying Lengths of the Lunar Years - It is to be noted that in all these various methods of reckoning years the basic unit of measure was evidently the lunar-calendar year of 12 months, corrected periodically to the solar or seasonal year by the 13th month. The common year of 12 months consisted of 354 days, but the adjustment to the moon sometimes required a 355-day year; and the periodic correction to the solar year required the addition of another month, and the lengthening of certain years to 383 or 384 days. This correction, if consistently applied as indicated by the barley harvest, never allowed the year to shift more than a month from its seasonal alignment. For this reason the number of Jewish calendar years over a long period, as has been pointed out always equaled the number of seasonal or solar years.

The 360-Day Year Not Literal but Symbolic - It should be explained, for it is subject to misunderstanding, that the Bible gives no evidence whatever that the 360-day prophetic year of twelve 30-day months has anything to do with the Hebrew calendar year. There are a few ancient traditions that the year earlier contained 360 days. It is not clear whether these are a mere reflection of the Egyptian

solar year, disregarding the 5 extra days at the end, or whether they refer to a genuine 360-day year, which would have remained perennially out of step with both the moon and the seasons. But there are no solid facts on which to base such a method of reckoning, and certainly nothing to connect it with the Hebrews, who began the month with the crescent moon.

The mention of a 150—day period during the Flood, which seems to be equated with 5 months, does not necessarily mean that the antediluvian calendar known to Noah had uniform months of 30 days each. The period has been interpreted also as indicating an unusual lunar year or a 365-day solar year. Whatever it was, it has no bearing on the lunar calendar used long afterward by the Hebrews. It is impossible to harmonize a 360-day year of 30-day months with months measured by the moon. In the very nature of the case a prophetic month or year, where the year-day principle is involved, must contain a fixed number of symbolic days if the length of the period is to be certainly known. Such a prophetic period cannot be based on a lunar calendar, whose months and years are variable. A reckoning by theoretical months of 30 days each would be understandable, and quite logical, for the idea that a month ought to have 30 days was implied in the later Jewish expressions used of the two types of months; a 30-day month was a “full” month, and a 29-day month was “hollow,” or deficient. It is possible, though there is no evidence, that the Hebrews used a theoretical 30-day month for business purposes, as did the Babylonians. Even today, we compute interest by a month of 30 days, although everyone knows that the months are not uniformly 30 days in length.

The lengths of the prophetic month and year are not directly given in the Bible, but can be derived from several prophetic periods that are obviously equivalent. Since in these prophecies $3\frac{1}{2}$ “times” are 1260 days (Revelation 12:6, 14), and 42 months are 1260 days (Revelation 11:2, 3), they must be equal. Since 42 months are $3\frac{1}{2}$ years, then $3\frac{1}{2}$ times must be $3\frac{1}{2}$ years. Further, since $3\frac{1}{2}$ years and 42 months are each equivalent to 1260 days, one year of this type is obviously 360 days, and one month 30 days (for the prophetic interpretation of the 360-day year, see on Daniel 7:25). A century and a half ago many writers on the prophecies thought that the 360-day prophetic year was the Jewish calendar year, but they did not understand the nature of the lunar calendar used by the Hebrews. Such outmoded authorities should not be quoted; the prophetic month and year can be based on the Bible itself.

New Calendar Problems After the Exile

The Jews and the Babylonian Calendar - When the Jews returned to Palestine after the Babylonian exile, they brought with them the Babylonian month names in modified form. For example, Abib became Nisan, from Nisanu, the first month of the Babylonian year. Some authorities think that until after the Exile the Hebrews did not insert a second Adar—a 13th month—to correct the calendar. But the Passover had to be synchronized with the barley harvest; therefore the Jews, from earliest times, must have had a 13th month or its equivalent. It is clear that the Israelites were not faithful in observing the Levitical law, but there is no reason to suppose that they never observed the Passover throughout the centuries.

Some think that the returning Hebrew exiles adopted the Babylonian calendar outright, including their 19-year cycle, and their exact system of inserting extra months. There is documentary evidence that the Jews after the captivity used the equivalent of the 19-year cycle, that is, the insertion of 7 extra months in 19 years, but there is no proof that they adopted the Babylonian custom of inserting a second Elul (the 6th

month) at times instead of a second Adar. Jewish authorities have always held that only the second Adar was used, and other authorities agree that in this they differed from the Babylonians. The reason for this was probably the fact that doubling the 6th month, Elul, instead of the 12th, Adar, would introduce an irregular interval between the spring and fall festivals, and thus cause confusion in attending the autumn feasts.

The Bible gives no direct evidence on the question, but the command to keep the Passover in the 1st month, the “month of ears,” and to observe three feasts in the 7th month, strongly implies that the autumn feasts were intended to come 6 months after the month of ears, and therefore that there was no irregularity in the interval from Nisan through Tishri.

In fact, a second Elul would have no significance in the Hebrew calendar, for the necessity for inserting the 13th month arose only from the requirement of keeping Nisan in line with the barley harvest. This could best be accomplished by adding a second Adar, just preceding Nisan. Placing the extra month 6 months earlier—if indeed the need for it could be predicted that far ahead—would have been of no advantage, and would have involved the disadvantage of interrupting the normal sequence of the festival months.

The Nineteen-Year Cycle - The adoption of a 19-year cycle would have been very helpful in fixing in advance the time of the Passover. As long as the insertion of the 13th month could not be announced until the barley crop was examined in Adar, the month of the Passover could not always be known far enough ahead to avoid inconvenience to those who had to make their plans to attend. But a 19-year cycle would have enabled them to space 7 extra months in every 19 years in a regular sequence of 2-year and 3-year intervals, and to keep the Passover date within the known season of ripening barley. The calendar would be regulated systematically and the 13-month years, recurring at predetermined intervals in each cycle, would always be known in advance.

This 19-year cycle can be explained as an expression of the relationship between solar and lunar years; namely, that 235 lunar months almost exactly (within an hour or two) equal 19 solar years. But 19 lunar years of 12 months, each would total not 235 but 228 months; therefore if an extra lunar month is inserted 7 times in every 19 years, the 19th lunar and solar years will end together. If, for example, the spring equinox fell on Nisan 1 in any given year, it would come on Nisan 1 again 19 years later.

The Babylonians developed such a cycle experimentally. By the early 4th century B.C., they inserted the extra month always in the same years of each 19-year cycle: a second Addaru (Adar) in what we call the 3rd, 6th, 8th, 11th, 14th, and 19th years, and a second Ululu (Elul) in the 17th. (It is known which years had 13 months but not which years the Babylonians called the “year 1” of each cycle; hence these numerals are arbitrary.) The Jews, however, seem never to have employed a second Elul, but only the second Adar. The question of when the Jews adopted the 19-year cycle is not settled. Since that cycle was known in Babylonia long before the Christian Era, and many Jews lived there from the 6th century B.C., it would seem hardly probable that the Jewish rabbis who were in charge of the calendar would remain ignorant of the principles of calendrical calculation until the fixed calendar was introduced, long after Christ’s day. It is probable that such principles were known long before the traditional methods were abandoned. Up to the time of the destruction of the Temple, the barley harvest was the major factor, but after that, and especially after the Jews were driven away from Jerusalem, it was less relevant to the problem that the convenience of uniform calculation in widely scattered areas.

Although the Bible nowhere hints of any 19-year cycle, the barley harvest rule would automatically result in an average of 7 extra months in every 19 years. Thus the laws of the festivals, without specifying any calendrical rules as such, served to regulate the Palestinian calendar naturally and simply.

Calculation of the Months Versus Observation - The question of the 13th month arose only once in two or three years, but the question of the beginning of the month was ever present. Especially after the captivity, when the majority of Jews remained in Babylonia, it was a very real problem to keep all the faithful observing the new moons and festivals together. The mere difference in the dating of documents was a minor matter, but the prospect of some Jews profaning sacred days while others were observing them was abhorrent to the pious.

The sanctity of the Temple and the prestige of the priesthood kept the Babylonian Jews looking toward Palestine for authority in this matter. Thus the postexilic calendar, even as followed by those Jews who remained for centuries in Babylonia, was regulated in Jerusalem. The first day of the month—at least after each 29-day month—was announced by fire signals repeated from mountaintop to mountaintop to the outlying districts of Palestine, and even on to Babylonia. Eventually, however, false beacons, lighted a day early by the Samaritans, misled the distant Jews into beginning a new month after 29 days when the outgoing month should have had 30 days. Consequently, the fire signals were replaced by messages sent by runners.

In Egypt, where fire signals could not be used, and afterward in all countries outside Palestine, the Jews came to observe new moons and festivals on two successive days, in order to be sure of having the right day. Even a month that followed a 29-day month could not be assumed to have 30 days; this doubt as to the first of the new month led to the observance of both the 30th and the day following. This custom was well known in Rome. Horace referred in his *Satires* (i. 9. 67-70) to the Jewish “*tricesima sabbata*,” or “30th-day sabbath”:

“Horace: ‘Certainly I do not know why you wish to speak secretly with me, you were saying.’

“Fuscus: ‘I remember well, but in a better time let me speak: today is *tricesima*

Sabbata: do you wish to offend the circumcised Jews?’”

After the lengths of the months became a matter of calculation, they could be known in advance without depending on direct observation. Unfortunately, we do not know when the change was made from observation to a regular sequence of 30-day and 29-day months. We have considerable direct evidence of postexilic calendar practice from dated Jewish documents found in Egypt, but the evidence from these sources has given rise to differences of opinion on the question of calculation versus observation.

It is likely that the calendar officials employed methods of calculation while still retaining the practice of summoning witnesses to report the appearance of the crescent every month, or at least for the month of Nisan. Such traditional procedures would naturally be retained long after they had become unnecessary.

During the period when the month depended on the observation of the crescent, or on confirmation by witnesses, there was uncertainty in distant places as to the correct day of the month, for, on account of certain variable factors, the actual appearance of the crescent could not be predicted. The failure to see a crescent on the evening after the 29th of the month might mean that the month should have 30 days, but it might also mean that atmospheric conditions unfavorable to visibility might delay its being seen in some

places later than in Jerusalem. And the difference in longitude between Palestine and Babylonia could sometimes mean that the crescent became visible in Jerusalem after it had already set for Babylonia (see next section). These elements of uncertainty operated even after the astronomical new moon, called “the moon in conjunction,” could be computed.

The Moon and the Observed Lunar Month - The interval between the astronomical new moon and the visible new moon (or crescent), with which the ancient Semites began each month of their observed lunar calendar, is variable. As the earth moves in one year round the sun, the moon circles the earth 12 times and a fraction. During each revolution of the moon (which marks a lunar month), that body passes between the earth and the sun, and also passes the point on the opposite side of the earth from the sun. When we see it opposite the sun, with its face completely illuminated by sunlight, we say that the moon is “full.” When it passes between us and the sun, we do not see it at all because the side toward us is unlighted. When it emerges from between the earth and the sun and becomes visible to us in crescent form—that is, we see the edge of its lighted portion—we say that it is “new.”

In order to understand this better, let us visualize an imaginary line connecting the center of the earth and the center of the sun. As the moon circles our globe, its path lies in a variable plane tilted at an angle in relation to that of the earth; therefore it is sometimes above and sometimes below the plane of the earth’s orbit as each month it passes between us and the sun and crosses the earth-sun line. If, as happens occasionally, the moon intersects this line, so that its shadow falls directly on our globe, observers within that shadow see its black disk darkening part or all of the sun in a solar eclipse. Most of the time, when it crosses above or below the imaginary line, it does not obscure the sun, but remains invisible, and therefore the exact time of the crossing (which astronomers call conjunction) cannot be observed. The time of conjunction, (the astronomical new moon) is given in almanacs and on some calendars, it is symbolized by a solid black disk.

But it is not often that the crescent becomes visible in the evening sky on the day marked “New Moon” in the almanac. When the moon passes conjunction during the day, it is too nearly in line with the sun to be seen that evening after sunset. Only after an interval—averaging about a day and a half—does it move far enough past the sun to bring its lighted side toward the earth sufficiently to appear as a crescent. When the crescent becomes visible, it may be seen on one part of the earth just after sunset, but observers on other parts of the globe farther east, for whom the moon will have already set, cannot see the crescent until the next evening. That is why the lunar month, starting with the observation of the crescent, could sometimes begin a day earlier in Egypt or Jerusalem, for example, than it would in Babylon.

The interval between conjunction and the visible crescent varies not only with the hour of conjunction and the locality, but also with the speed and angle of the moon’s course, which are variable. When it is slower, the moon takes longer—perhaps two or three days—to move far enough from the sun to be seen. Further, atmospheric conditions affect visibility, and in certain seasons, the crescent may be entirely obscured by clouds on the first evening, and so a 29-day lunar month might be given 30 days and the new month delayed one day.

The Postexilic Month Names - After the return from Exile, the Babylonian month names were adopted, in slightly changed spelling, as has been mentioned. As for the beginning of the year, both fall and spring reckoning seem to be used in the postexilic books of the Bible. It is to be kept in mind that regardless of whether the year is reckoned from the autumn or from the spring, Nisan is always numbered as the 1st

month, Tishri the 7th, and Adar the 12th. Thus, the civil year begins with the 7th month and ends with the 6th. This alignment of the months, and the approximate equivalents in our calendar, is made clear by the following tabulation:

THE JEWISH CALENDAR

(With postexilic month names derived from Babylonia)

Religious Year (Spring to Spring)	Beginning of Jewish months (varying with moon, within range of one month)	Civil Year (Fall to Fall)
Order of the months		Order of the months
1. Nisan	March/April	
2. Iyyar*	April/May	
3. Sivan	May/June	
4. Tammuz*	June/July	
5. Ab*	July/Aug	
6. Elul	Aug/Sept	
7. Tishri*	Sept/Oct	7. Tishri*
8. Marheshvan*	Oct/Nov	8. Marheshvan*
9. Kislev (Chisleu)	Nov/Dec	9. Kislev (Chisleu)
10. Tebeth	Dec/Jan	10. Tebeth
11. Shebat	Jan/Feb	11. Shebat
12. Adar†	Feb/March	12. Adar†
	March/April	1. Nisan
	April/May	2. Iyyar*
	May/June	3. Sivan
	June/July	4. Tammuz*
	July/Aug	5. Ab*

	Aug/Sept	6. Elul
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* Month names not mentioned in the Bible.

† In leap years a second Adar follows Adar, preceding Nisan.

The Postexilic Year in the Bible - Ezekiel does not make it clear whether the years of his era, beginning with the exile of Jehoiachin, were reckoned from Nisan or from Tishri, or were counted by anniversaries from the date of the king's captivity. But if Ezekiel, as is generally held, reckoned the year from the spring, he may have done so because he lived in Babylonia and used the official Babylonian calendar, which began the year with *Nisanu* (Nisan). Thus, his usage would have no bearing on Jewish calendar practice. Haggai, and presumably his contemporary and colleague, Zechariah (although the latter is inconclusive), are generally believed to have used the spring year, for if the events of Haggai 1:1 and 2:1, 10 are related in chronological order, the 7th and 9th months followed the 6th month in the 2nd year of Darius, as could not have occurred if the 7th month had begun a new year. The book of Esther, which identifies Nisan as the 1st month, Sivan as the 3rd, and Adar as the 12th, sheds no light on how the Jews reckoned the beginning of the year, since the dates in this book are given in connection with official acts of leaders in the Persian government. These events would presumably be dated in the Babylonian calendar, which the Persian rulers adopted from the time that Cyrus conquered Babylonia.

In the time of Ezra and Nehemiah (Ezra-Nehemiah was originally one book), there is proof that the returned Jews counted the years of the king from the fall, presumably by the civil year beginning with Tishri. Nehemiah mentions Chisleu (Kislev, the 9th month) as preceding Nisan (the 1st month) in the 20th year of Artaxerxes (Nehemiah 1:1; 2:1). Evidently, he was thinking in terms of the old regnal year of Judah and reckoning from the 7th month, Tishri, rather than the Persian new year in Nisan. Although the events mentioned in these two months occurred in the Persian king's palace, the book was not written until after Nehemiah had gone to Jerusalem and engaged in the rebuilding of the Jewish community there. In such a situation—under the restoration of a Jewish administration at the ancient capital of Judah—it was natural that there should be a resurgence of patriotism, and a return to the old calendar and regnal year of Judah. Further, a document from a Jewish colony in Egypt, written in the same century with Ezra and Nehemiah, shows that these Jews in Egypt also used a Jewish calendar year beginning in the fall.

Archeology and the Postexilic Calendar

Jewish Documents From Egypt - This last-mentioned document is one of over 100, written in Aramaic on papyrus, that have been found on the island of Elephantine in the Nile River, in the ruins of a border garrison town settled by Jewish mercenaries and their families. These Aramaic papyri from Elephantine (sometimes inaccurately referred to as the Assuan Papyri) form one of the most interesting collections of ancient documents. They are wills, deeds, contracts, letters, and other documents, coming from the 5th century B.C., the century of Ezra and Nehemiah. In these papers we find not only references to the public and private affairs of the local Jews but also mention of such intriguing items as the Jews in Palestine, the Passover, an official mentioned in the Bible, and a Jewish temple on Elephantine built by the colonists. These papyri, some of which were found still rolled up and sealed, show us the exact form

of the language used by the Jews after the Exile—Aramaic, a language closely akin to Hebrew, used internationally in Babylonia and throughout the Persian Empire. They also show us the very spelling and handwriting, the ink and “paper,” of the sort used in the time of the returning exiles, and the legal phraseology of a royal decree of a kind similar to those quoted from the Persian archives in the book of Ezra—the Aramaic passages that were regarded by critics as proving the unhistorical character of the book.

Indeed, these ancient papyri from Elephantine stirred up much difference of opinion, and were even regarded as forgeries in some quarters because of the unusual form of the date lines many of them bore—double dates in two calendars with sometimes apparently conflicting regnal-year numbers. But these double dates proved to be excellent evidence of their genuineness, for they synchronize the Egyptian and Jewish calendar dates in a way that enables us to calculate the very days on which they were written. These dates corroborate the chronology of the reigns of that period as reckoned in Ptolemy’s Canon.

The Jewish colonists of Elephantine had been in Egypt before Cyrus’ successor, Cambyses, conquered the country and made it part of the Persian Empire. Whether they first arrived as exiles after the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, as did the group who took the prophet Jeremiah with them, we do not know; but the references to religion in these papers reveal the same conditions that Jeremiah deplored—the mingling of paganism with the worship of Jehovah. In the Jewish temple at Elephantine Jehovah was worshiped along with pagan deities.

Not only are the dates and contents of these Jewish documents interesting; their date lines furnish information about the Jewish calendar of the period.

Local Calendars Retained Under Persian Rule - When Cyrus the Persian conquered Babylon, he did not incorporate Babylonia into Persia under a provincial government; rather he annexed the kingdom to his earlier domain and took the title of king of Babylon in addition to his title of king of Media and Persia. In Babylonia the Persians adopted the language and culture of the country and took over the Babylonian calendar. In fact the Babylonian priests, the custodians of the accumulated astronomical knowledge of centuries, and of the calendar system, flourished under Persian protection and made further advance in the regulation of the calendar.

Similarly, when Cyrus’ son Cambyses added Egypt to the Persian Empire, he continued the machinery of Egyptian government, but had himself crowned king of Egypt. Then he ruled the country through a governor who was nominally the viceroy of the Persian “Pharaoh,” retaining the local legal system and the Egyptian calendar. In later times the Romans were to follow the similar policy of allowing the use of various older local calendars in the eastern provinces, although eventually throughout the empire these calendars were adjusted to the Julian year of 365 1/4 days, that is, the local month names were retained but the lengths were adjusted to 30 and 31 days, etc., like the Roman months.

Under Persian rule in Egypt it seems that legal papers were drawn up in accordance with the local laws and dated by the native calendar; these papyrus documents from Elephantine, with a few exceptions, bore date lines carrying the Egyptian month and day, and the regnal year of the Persian king reckoned by the Egyptian solar calendar (beginning with the month Thoth). This was a sensible procedure, for two ordinary citizens signing a contract in Egypt could not be expected to know when their payments should fall due or the contract expire if the date were given in terms of a foreign calendar.

But these particular documents were drawn up by Jews living in a Jewish community, using their own calendar, differing from that of Egypt. Therefore many of these papyri bore double dates, not only in the official Egyptian calendar, but also in the Jewish calendar. For example, one was dated “on the 18th of Elul, that is, the 28th day of Pachons, year 15 of King Xerxes.” This means that the document was signed on a day that was the 18th of the Jewish lunar month of Elul and was also the 28th of the Egyptian month Pachons in the 15th year of the reign of the Persian king Xerxes. Another reads, “on the 24th of Shebat, year 13, that is the 9th day of Athyr, year 14 of Darius [II] the king.” This gives two year numbers. The date was in year 13 in the Jewish calendar, but in the Egyptian calendar another year had already begun; hence this same date was in the Jewish year 13 and the Egyptian year 14 of Darius II.

These double dates show that the various peoples of the Persian Empire used their own calendars. Although under Persian rule, the Egyptians retained their solar calendar (indeed, they always retained it, and bequeathed the 365-day year to Rome and, through Rome, to us). Further, the Jews, as a minority in Egypt, were free to use their own calendar, although it was different from that of Egypt. The legal dating for these documents seems to have been the Egyptian form, for if only one date was given, it was generally in the Egyptian formula, with the king’s year reckoned by the Egyptian calendar. Many of them, however, bore double dates, both Egyptian and Jewish.

The Problem of Reconstructing an Ancient Calendar - Since the Egyptian calendar for this period is known, the Julian equivalent of the Egyptian date can be located. Even if the year is unknown it can be derived from the synchronism of the lunar with the solar date, for the lunar date, moving at least 10 days in one year, can agree with the Egyptian solar date only once in about 25 years. Thus these double-dated papyri can be dated in the Julian B.C. scale. By the use of these established dates as check points, a tabulation of the Jewish calendar as used in Egypt can be reconstructed for a large part of the 5th century with a greater degree of accuracy than can be done for that of Babylon, although the Babylonian calendar can be outlined, approximately, for a much longer period. For the Egyptian and Julian calendars.

Since the dates of many of these papyri can be determined within the range of a day, in each case the dates of that whole month are known with the same precision. There is a possibility of a discrepancy of one day, sometimes two, in the exact dating of the other months of that year if the beginning of the month still depended on the observation of the moon. The time of the astronomical new moon (conjunction) for each of these months can be computed almost exactly from modern lunar tables but the interval between the invisible conjunction and the visible crescent is variable. If we wish to find the dates of ancient Jewish months, we can compute from astronomical tables the approximate times of conjunction for any year in antiquity, and can estimate the first of the new month by taking into account the hour of conjunction by Jerusalem local time, and the speed and angle of the moon. But we can never be certain of complete accuracy in reconstructing that ancient calendar year as it actually operated, for we cannot be sure that we know all the variable factors in the observation of the crescent, nor do we know whether the year was reckoned by calculation or observation during the period covered by the Aramaic papyri from Elephantine.

R. A. Parker and W. H. Dubberstein have reconstructed an outline of Babylonian chronology, beginning in 626 B.C. In this monograph they have published Babylonian calendar tables covering a number of centuries, based on certain fixed dates and on certain 13th months attested from ancient records, and elsewhere on computed dates. These tables are very useful as an approximation. The user must allow for an uncertainty in some cases as to where the 13th months were inserted, and allow for an error of plus or

minus one day in some of the months. And this is reasonable accuracy for reconstructing an ancient lunar calendar.

Since so many variable elements are involved in locating the first day of the month, the location of the remaining days in each month is similarly uncertain; consequently, the full moon (which can be fixed approximately by astronomical computation) does not always come on the same day of the lunar month. In the period of these papyri it varied from the 13th to the 15th.

Even at points where an ancient record fixes beyond question a lunar date or series of dates, the calendar cannot be reconstructed beyond that particular year without the occasional possibility of being a month off if the location of the 13th month is unknown. Not until the early 4th century B.C. did the Babylonians insert their 7 extra months always in the same years of each 19-year cycle, and we do not know that the Jews had a similarly regular cycle.

However, when there are ancient source documents, we can be fairly certain. If we have Babylonian tablets indicating that a particular year had 13 months, the calendar months of that Babylonian year can be identified with reasonable certainty; and if we have a synchronism identifying a day of a given lunar month with a day of a known calendar, as in the Jewish double-dated papyri from Egypt, even the days of that month can be known. That is why, for a considerable period in the 5th century B.C., the Jewish calendar as used by the writers of these papyri can be reconstructed with approximate accuracy. Such a calendar has been reconstructed by Lynn H. Wood and Siegfried H. Horn, giving the first day of each Jewish month from 472 to 400 B.C.

Jewish Calendar in Egypt - A study of this tabulation and of the 14 double-dated papyri on which it is based makes clear the following 12 characteristics of the postexilic Jewish calendar:

1. These Jews dated by their own Jewish calendar, differing slightly from the Babylonian system.
2. Unlike the Persians, but like the Jewish repatriates at Jerusalem (Nehemiah 1:1; 2:1), they reckoned the years of the king's reign from the autumn rather than from the spring.
3. Unlike the Egyptians, but after the old custom of Judah, they regarded the interval from the accession of the king until the next New Year's Day as the "accession year", after which the "first year" of the reign began.
4. They had adopted, in Aramaic spelling, the Babylonian month names, all 12 of which appear in these papyri.
5. Although there is no mention of a second Adar, the intervals between the dates of certain papyri indicate the use of a 13th month at various times.
6. If they did not know a fixed 19-year cycle as such, they evidently used its equivalent in that the intervals between these double-dated papyri imply an average of seven 13-month years in every 19 years.
7. These Jewish 13th months probably fell most often in the same years as in the Babylonian calendar. In the aforementioned Horn-Wood tabulation they are the same months as those in Parker and Dubberstein's tables (Babylonian Chronology, 1956 ed.) with a very few exceptions, such as when the Babylonians inserted a second Elul instead of a second Adar in the 17th year of their cycle (as they came to do regularly—and, in later times, invariably—after the Babylonian cycle became fixed).

8. These Jews seem not to have used the second Elul. Of three papyri dated in 17th years, where we should expect it, two do not prove the practice, and one proves definitely that they did not reckon a second Elul in that year.
9. The evidence is not at present fully conclusive that the calendar was based on computation rather than observation of the moon, for the relation of the calendar dates to the moon have been interpreted in either way because of variable factors. But there are indications that it was computed to some degree.
10. Although there is no conclusive proof of computation of the lengths of the months at this period (No. 9), it is interesting to note that a possible fixed sequence of 30-day and 29-day months from Nisan to Tishri, which would have allowed the same number of days between Passover and Tabernacles, is compatible with the dates of these papyri. A reconstructed calendar based on this sequence is reasonably consistent with the actual motions of the moon.
11. The 1st of Nisan seems to have been kept, so far as the years represented by these papyri are concerned, from moving earlier than the vernal equinox. (See NOTE) That is, if the month following Adar began before the equinox, it was made the 2nd Adar, and Nisan was postponed until the next month. (This contradicts the later opinion of the rabbis that in the postexilic period the Passover came at the first full moon after the vernal equinox.)
NOTE: Unless the divergence mentioned in note 5 is to be accepted.
12. There is no indication of the practice of adjusting the length of the year to prevent certain feasts from falling on certain days of the week, as was done in the later, fixed calendar published long after the time of Christ.

The Jewish colonists in Egypt who wrote these papyri were in correspondence with their returned brethren in Palestine, but we do not know whether they were in close enough contact to enable them to keep the insertion of the 13th month in exact synchronism with the reckoning followed at Jerusalem.

NOTE: Certain evidence, not conclusive, had led some scholars to believe that these colonists failed at one period to make the adjustment properly; that by inserting too few 13th months they allowed their calendar to diverge from the normal 19-year cycle, with the year beginning too early, and then, through closer contact with revived Judaism in Palestine, corrected the error by inserting the extra month more often. This could easily have happened, but the evidence is based on double dates that are inconclusive or disputed. If it did occur, it would be interesting to know the cause—possibly the fact that the barley harvest in southern Egypt, coming earlier than in Palestine, could not be depended on as a guide.

It is remarkable that these double-dated papyri, which could not have survived at Jerusalem, but which have been preserved in the drier climate of a distant Jewish outpost in Egypt, have now come forth to give us a glimpse of the postexilic calendar in operation. These documents show the Jews (1) holding to their own way of reckoning, which was independent of that of their Egyptian neighbors; (2) differing from the Babylonian system of their Persian overlords, which many scholars have assumed that they slavishly adopted. Nor do these Jews seem to know anything of certain rules attributed to them by the much later traditions of the Mishnah and Gemara in the early centuries of the Christian Era.

Different From Later Rabbinical Calendar

The Jewish calendar and sectarian variants in the intertestamental and New Testament periods lie beyond the range of this chapter. But in the Mishnah, and then the Gemara, written in the early Christian centuries, we find a few bits of information concerning the Jewish calendar at the end of the 2nd century A.D. and

later, most of it in the form of traditions of earlier practices. It is in the Mishnah that we find accounts of the examination of witnesses before the Sanhedrin as to the appearance of the crescent, and the announcement of the new month to outlying regions by means of fire signals. The questions asked regarding the exact form of the crescent would seem to indicate that the first barely visible crescent was probably not counted; some say the “horned” phase, indicating that a longer interval might have been reckoned from conjunction to crescent. Other questions seem to indicate that the examiners were less interested in seeking information than in eliciting confirmation of knowledge that they already had by calculation, and that the formal procedure of visibly noting the new moon was carried on from precedent long after the principles to calculate its appearance were known.

In the Talmudic arguments, some doubtless dating from as late as the 5th century A.D., later concepts are sometimes applied erroneously to earlier times; therefore these conflicting traditional authorities must be used with caution. For example, the belief that the 16th of Nisan could move back almost to the spring equinox is opposed to the facts of the barley harvest and to the evidence of the source documents from the postexilic period. Traditional references to the full moon of the Passover may indicate efforts to stabilize the month in relation to the full moon, at least in Nisan, but the 5th-century B.C. papyri give no hint of this. It is quite likely that in the period of the second Temple, the months were at least partly regulated by something more than simple observation from month to month, but we cannot be sure from the available sources how early and to what extent computation was employed.

Eventually, after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans and the dispersion and persecution of the Jews by later emperors, the practice of regulating the calendar from Jerusalem was necessarily abandoned, and an arbitrary scheme was substituted, so that Jews in all lands could reckon the dates of the sacred feasts uniformly. Thenceforth the Jews in Babylonia or anywhere else could regulate the calendar by artificial means, regardless of the barley harvest in Judea or the appearance of the moon at Jerusalem.

It was once thought that the calendar as revised, supposedly in the 4th century, had come down unchanged to the present day, but most authorities now think that the reform was a gradual growth, taking several centuries, incorporating earlier traditions and later developments. Some of the medieval disputes between the rabbinical advocates of the fixed calendar and the Karaites, who attempted to retain observation and the barley harvest rule, indicate that the question of the calendar was still a live issue. The present sequence of the seven 13-month years in each 19-year cycle, and the numbering of years consecutively from a supposed era of creation, (See NOTE) were not adopted by the Jews until the Middle Ages.

NOTE: The 3rd, 6th, 8th, 11th, 14th, 17th, and 19th years of each cycle counted from a theoretical beginning in 3761 B.C. This means that 1975/76 is counted as the 17th year of a cycle, with a second Adar in the spring of 1976.

CHAPTER SEVEN

BIBLE CHRONOLOGY FROM EXODUS TO EXILE

Like all other ancient time records, those of the Bible present problems. In the first place, the records are often incomplete. In the second, we cannot always be sure that we know the method by which the ancients reckoned; for example, whether they reckoned the year as beginning in the spring or the autumn, or whether inclusive reckoning was used in such a phrase as “three years.” Again, it is not always possible to synchronize Biblical with secular chronology.

For these and other reasons that might be given, it is not possible to prepare a complete and exact scheme of Bible chronology. However, it is possible to construct a tentative chronological outline, particularly for the reigns of the Hebrew kings, that can be of great help to the Bible student.

The purpose of this chapter is to set forth reasons for the choice of the dates given in that outline. The following information surveys the source data, discusses the principles and methods used by scholars in constructing ancient chronology, and explains the application of these principles to chronological problems of this period of Bible history. It should be added that learned men have differed in their conclusions on Bible chronology, and that this chapter does not set forth in full any chronological scheme yet published.

The Conquest of Canaan

The Territory East of the Jordan - When the hosts of Israel turned finally from Kadesh toward the Promised Land they came to Mt. Hor, where Aaron died and where they mourned for him 30 days (Numbers 20:22-29). The date of his death was the 1st day of the 5th month, in the 40th year of the Exodus (Numbers 33:38). Thus, presumably, they did not leave Mt. Hor until the beginning of the 6th month. After several stops, they reached the territory of Sihon, king of the Amorites, east of the Jordan and the Dead Sea. Being refused passage, they conquered Sihon's land from the Arnon to the Jabbok. They also took the territory north of the Jabbok, that is, Gilead and Bashan (Numbers 21:21-35), and then returned to camp east of the Jordan opposite Jericho. This must have been a short campaign, because after this occurred the incident of Balaam, the idolatry and punishment of the Israelites, and the numbering of the people, all before the 1st day of the 11th month of the 40th year, when Moses began his final discourses, recounting to Israel their past experiences and admonishing them as to their future course (Deuteronomy 1:3-5). Then Moses died, probably about the beginning of the 12th month, for after mourning for him 30 days (Deuteronomy 34:5-8) the Israelites proceeded on their way, in the first days of the first month, and crossed the Jordan on the 10th of the month (Joshua 4:19). This entry into Canaan on the 10th, and the observance of the Passover on the 14th, were obviously in the 41st year of the Exodus. Thus the period of the wanderings was one of 40 full years, extending from the midnight deliverance from Egypt on the 15th of the 1st month in the 1st year of the period, to the first Passover in the land of Canaan,

following the crossing of the Jordan in the 41st year. But the conquest of Amorite territory before crossing the river occurred in the second half of the 40th year.

This last date is important because it establishes, in relation to the Exodus, the date of the entry into Canaan, and pegs down a landmark from which a period is reckoned in the time of the judges—Jephthah's 300 years from the occupation of Sihon's city of Heshbon and its surrounding territory.

The Conquest of Canaan Proper - In the 41st year, then, according to this Exodus reckoning, Joshua led the armies of Israel in several campaigns to subdue the land west of the river. His forces included a contingent from the tribes that were to settle in the Transjordan territory recently won from the Amorites. The land was not completely conquered during this war, for the Israelites could not drive out the inhabitants of many of the strongly fortified cities, and many of those conquered in the first campaigns were not held permanently. Yet the country was subdued sufficiently to halt opposition to the settlement of the Israelites. Even after "Joshua took the whole land," and "the land rested from war" (Joshua 11:23), he told the Israelites that "there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed" (chapter 13:1). Ending the armed opposition and allotting the land to the tribes was not the same thing as actually possessing the whole land; this was not accomplished fully until the time of David. But the first stage was completed in the matter of a few years.

The Assemblies at Gilgal and Shiloh - After the division of most of the land had been completed, the Israelites assembled at Gilgal, where the Passover had first been observed and the tabernacle had been set up. On this occasion the aged Caleb asked for the region of Hebron as his allotment of territory (Joshua 14:6-15). He stated that he was 40 years old when he went with the spies from Kadesh-barnea (in the second year of the Exodus), and that now he was 85 years old. This occasion was therefore in the 46th or 47th year from the Exodus. Since the first campaigns east of the Jordan began in the 40th year, this would make the wars of Canaan last six or seven years. Further distribution of the land by lot (chapters 15-17) was followed by the setting up of the tabernacle at Shiloh (chapter 18:1). If this took place immediately after the assembly at Gilgal mentioned in chapter 14:6, it was soon after the seven-year war.

This chapter uses a dating of the Hebrew kings that puts the spring of Solomon's year 4 in 966 B.C., in the 480th year from the Exodus. Then the Exodus, in the 1st year of that period, 479 years earlier, was in 1445 B.C., and thus the conquest of Heshbon and the other Amorite territory late in 1406, the crossing of the Jordan in the spring of 1405, and the gathering at Gilgal after the war in Canaan, in 1400 or 1399.

The uncertainty in this last date stems from the question of whether Caleb, in speaking of his age as 85, counted the years from the spring or the fall; he did not specifically refer to the years of the Exodus, but was reckoning his own age. (See note below) The Exodus reckoning, as an era, was used by Moses, but it does not seem to have survived as a means of dating, except in the case of Solomon's 4th year (1 Kings 6:1). Although the months were always numbered from Abib (later called Nisan), in the spring, the years were generally reckoned from the fall. The gathering at Gilgal, presumably at a regular feast, could have been at the Feast of Tabernacles in 1400 B.C., the Passover in 1399, or the Feast of Tabernacles in 1399.

NOTE: If Caleb was calculating the 45 years since he was 40 in terms of a chronological period based on Moses' Exodus era, he probably was thinking of 45 years after the second year in which the spies went out. This would have been, by the practice so common in ancient times, 45 years inclusive, thus ending in the 46th, not the 47th, year of the period (or 1400 B.C., if we reckon the Exodus in 1445). But if he did this, he would have been 85 years old in the 46th year from the Exodus only if he counted his own age by the fall-to-fall year, and was speaking in the latter part of the 46th year, after an autumn new year had begun his own

85th year. But if, as seems more likely, Caleb was merely making a quick, oral computation based on his age, and was reckoning the 45 years only as years of his life, without regard to an era, he probably merely subtracted 40, his age when he spied out the land, from his present age of 85, and arrived at 45 years as the interval. Of course, this would be 45 years elapsed, not 45 inclusive. If he reckoned his age by years beginning in the spring, coinciding with the years of the Exodus, his 85th year would have coincided with the 47th year of the Exodus reckoning (or 1399/98 B.C.); if by fall-to-fall years, it would include half of the 46th and half of the 47th; therefore this occasion could have come in either 1400 or 1399.

Following this meeting at Gilgal, the tabernacle was moved to Shiloh (Joshua 18:1), where the final allotment of territory was made to the remaining tribes. There is no indication of the interval between the meeting at Gilgal and the one at Shiloh. The tabernacle was moved not earlier than 1400, and presumably not much later than 1399.

Joshua's Death and the Ensuing Apostasy - The next chronological item, an uncertain one, is the death of Joshua at the age of 110 (Joshua 24:29). It was "many days" after the end of the war that Joshua called the people together, and told them, "Behold, I have divided unto you ... an inheritance for your tribes" (Joshua 23:4), and bade them farewell with, "Behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth" (verse 14). If this was soon after the division of the land at Gilgal and Shiloh, then Joshua was nearing 110 years of age at the time Caleb was 85, was about 65 when he acted as one of the 12 spies, and was a centenarian when he led the Israelites into Canaan. If, however, he was about Caleb's age, his death took place 25 years after the end of the war. Thus the interval between the entry into Canaan and the first judge has a wide margin of uncertainty. In either case, we must allow a considerable period after Joshua's death before the first judges, for it was after the apostasy of the generation that succeeded Joshua that the oppressions began, and the judges were raised up to deliver the Israelites. Apostasy was appallingly rapid (see on Judges 18:30 for the conditions in the lifetime of a possible grandson of Moses), but it must have taken at least several decades for the younger contemporaries of Joshua to die out. It was after "all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel," that "the children of Israel did evil" and forsook the God of their fathers, so that the Lord delivered them into the hands of their enemies, and then raised up judges who repeatedly delivered them and sought to bring them back to the worship of God (see chapter 2:10-16).

The Period of the Judges

The chronology of the period of the judges presents problems if we attempt to place all the events in consecutive order. There is no need to doubt the figures, but the problem of harmonizing them with the events described in the end of the book of Joshua and the beginning of 1 Samuel has given rise to varying opinions and solutions. The account is so abbreviated that we do not have all the facts concerning the relationship between the various judges and the intervening periods of oppression. The fact that the story of one judge is told without a hint that there was any other judge in another part of the land at the same time does not rule out the possibility of contemporary judges.

The Data of the Book of Judges - The writer of Judges did not set out to give all the details of the history of his period; his purpose was to show how the Israelites repeatedly forsook God and fell a prey to their enemies, were in turn rescued and given another opportunity. Whether these events happened successively or contemporaneously in different sections of the country had no bearing on the lesson of the

book, and so the writer did not supply all the details of the timing, although he preserved carefully the number of years of each judge and of the periods of oppression. They are given as follows:

Joshua and the elders that outlived him	x	Years	Ch.	2:7
Oppression under Cushan–rishathaim	8	“	“	3:8
Deliverance by Othniel; the land rests	40	“	“	3:11
Oppression by Eglon of Moab	18	“	“	3:14
Deliverance by Ehud; the land rests	80	“	“	3:30
Oppression by Jabin and the Canaanites	20	“	“	4:3
Deliverance by Deborah; the land rests	40	“	“	5:31
Oppression by the Midianites	7	“	“	6:1
Deliverance by Gideon; the land rests	40	“	“	8:28
Abimelech reigns over Israel	3	“	“	9:22
Tola judges Israel	23	“	“	10:2
Jair judges Israel	22	“	“	10:3
Oppression by the Ammonites (and Philistines)	18	“	“	10:7,8
Deliverance by Jephthah	6	“	“	12:7
Ibzan judges Israel	7	“	“	12:9
Elon judges Israel	10	“	“	12:11
Abdon judges Israel	8	“	“	12:14
Oppression by the Philistines	40	“	“	13:1
Samson judges Israel	20	“	“	15:20
	410 plus x			

The x years represent the unknown period, probably several decades, during which the Israelites “served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua” (Judges 2:7), and then apostatized. Even leaving out the x years preceding the first oppression, we have a total of 319 years to the end of the 18 years of Ammonite invasion, which Jephthah spoke of as 300 years. This 319 plus x may well be 350 or more; and the total of 410 plus x for the whole sum of the years of the judges and the

intervening periods of oppression is probably more than 450. Evidently not all these periods were successive.

Some Periods Overlap - The record clearly indicates an overlapping of some of these judgeships and servitudes. The 20 years of Samson fell within the 40 years of Philistine oppression, for “he judged Israel in the days of the Philistines twenty years” (Judges 15:20). Further, in connection with the statement that the Philistines oppressed Israel 40 years (chapter 13:1), it was foretold that Samson would only “begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines” (verse 5). If, then, Samson’s 20 years are part of the 40, the total is reduced from 410 plus x to 390 plus x.

But the 40 years of the Philistines oppression seem to have been partly contemporaneous with the 18 years of servitude to the Ammonites, for it is said that “the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and he sold them into the hands of the Philistines, and into the hands of the children of Ammon” (chapter 10:7). Then follows the description of the Ammonite oppression and the deliverance by Jephthah (chapters 10:8 to 12:7), and after this an enumeration of the three judges who succeeded him, evidently unimportant characters of whom little more is recorded than the duration of their judgeships, totaling 25 years (chapter 12:8-15); then chapter 13 returns to the 40-year Philistine oppression to recount the life of Samson, and how he “began” to deliver Israel from the Philistines. Thus the Scripture indicates that the Philistine oppression and the Ammonite oppression were contemporaneous. The Ammonites, inhabiting the Transjordan plateau toward the edge of the desert, swept over the eastern tribes of Israel (for Gad, Reuben, and half the tribe of Manasseh lived east of the Jordan), and continued their pillaging for 18 years. Finally, they invaded the territory of Judah, Benjamin, and Ephraim west of the Jordan (chapter 10:8, 9). The Israelites, thus harassed from the east, had no opportunity to employ their united strength to defend the west, where the Philistines on the southern portion of the seacoast raided Judah and Dan and threatened the western tribes.

Other Periods Probably Contemporaneous - It is obvious that if some of these periods in the book of Judges were contemporaneous, as the record seems to indicate, it is likely that some of the others also were simultaneous, occurring in different parts of the land, even though we cannot tell which periods overlap and for how long. This seems all the more likely when we notice that these judges were widely scattered geographically: Othniel was from Judah, Deborah from Ephraim, Barak from Naphtali, Ehud from Benjamin, Gideon from Manasseh, Tola from Issachar, Jair and Jephthah from Gilead, east of the Jordan, Ibzan and Elon from Zebulum, Abdon from Ephraim, and Samson from Dan. During this period the tribes were living in widely scattered territories largely in mountainous terrain separated by areas held by Canaanites, whom they had never succeeded in driving completely from the land, and whose fortresses held the main routes of communication in the lowlands. It is doubtful that any of these judges ruled over any large portion of the Israelites. The record reveals that even in a time of crisis, when a deliverer was fighting to repel the oppressors, not all the tribes rallied to drive out the invaders. The reason may be that not all the tribes were oppressed at any one time, and that consequently the deliverers were more or less local.

Jephthah’s 300 Years - Further, if Jephthah’s 300-year estimate of the time of the Hebrew occupation of the towns of the Amorites is anywhere near exact, there was necessarily an overlapping of the periods up to his time, for the total, excluding the time of Joshua and the surviving elders is 319 years.

It is not necessary to assume that Jephthah's 300-year statement was exact, since he was at the time contending with the Ammonite invaders, and in the heat of controversy he doubtless did not stop to look up any records or consult a tribal "rememberer" to get the exact figure, but used a round number. This number was likely rounded off to the hundred above the actual total rather than to less than the exact interval. But it is also possible that the elapsed time was exactly 300 years when Jephthah spoke. If it was, we have the exact date, in relation to the Exodus, since the towns of Heshbon were taken from Sihon, king of the Amorites, in the 40th year of the Exodus (1406/05 B.C., according to the dating of the Exodus utilized for this chapter). Then 300 years, inclusive, from the acquisition of that territory would be 1107/06 B.C.

The Later Judges - If the 40 years of Philistine oppression ended with the battle of Ebenezer (1 Samuel 7:5-14), the most likely event to terminate this period, then the judgeships following Jephthah must have overlapped also, probably more extensively than those before him. Samson would be a contemporary of Jephthah; and Eli, who died after 40 years as judge (see chapter 4:4, 11, 18), 20 years before the battle of Ebenezer (see chapters 6:1; 7:1, 2, 11-14), must have been older than either Jephthah or Samson. If the ark was in Shiloh some 300 years, reckoned from a point 6 or 7 years later than the beginning of Jephthah's 300 years, and was taken from Shiloh to the battle in which it was captured by the Philistines, then the death of Eli following this battle took place about the time of Jephthah. The ark, returned by the Philistines, was placed at Kirjath-jearim, where it had been 20 years at the time the Israelites won their decisive victory over the Philistines at Ebenezer.

It was at that time that Samuel was made judge (chapter 7:6, 15-17). We are not told how long Samuel's judgeship lasted, but we do know that it closed the whole period of the judges. Some take it as ending with the coronation of Saul, when the monarchy replaced the theocratic government of the judges, but some extend it to Samuel's death, since he continued to function as a judge (chapter 7:15) although the judge was no longer the chief magistrate after the monarchy was set up. Nothing is recorded of Samuel's age, except that he was born when Eli was no longer young; that he received his first message from God while he was still a boy; that he was old enough to be known as a prophet before Eli's death (chapter 3), though he was apparently young enough to be passed by as judge until 20 years later (chapter 7). A fragmentary manuscript from a Dead Sea cave, containing parts of 1 Samuel 1 and 2, gives Eli's age as 90, not at his death (as in LXX), but at some time after Samuel was placed in his care (see on chapter 2:22). If Samuel was about 3 when brought to Eli (see 1 Samuel 1:24), he was at least 11 when Eli died at 98. This fragment may preserve an original figure, later lost, but we cannot build on this assumption. Samuel was judge long enough to be an old man who had already relinquished at least part of his work to his sons before the Israelites demanded a king (chapter 8:1-5). If he lived through the greater part of Saul's reign, as the record indicates, he must have been very old when he died. Samuel is the link between the period of the judges and that of the monarchy. Thus it would seem that the first part of the book of 1 Samuel covers a period contemporary with the last part of the book of Judges, presumably chapters 10-16.

The Judges and the 480 Years - With such overlaps as are here indicated, it is entirely possible that the 40 years of wandering in the wilderness, the conquest of Canaan, the period of the elders that outlived Joshua, the subsequent apostasy, the various judgeships, some of them contemporaneous, including the judgeship of Samuel, and the reigns of Saul and David could have occurred within the space of 480 years, as indicated in 1 Kings 6:1. There is no way of computing exactly the length of the period of the judges, or the specific overlaps, but a tentative outline of the period that fits this chronology has been included in

the section on history. This outline is intended only as an approximation of what may have happened, but it demonstrates that the figures in the book of Judges can be reasonably interpreted by means of overlaps that agree with the historical situation and with the interpretation of the 480 years as the exact length of the period from the Exodus to and including the 4th year of Solomon.

Those who follow the longer chronology of the judges, and make all the periods consecutive throughout, interpret the 480 years as the sum of the actual judgeships, excluding the periods of oppression or usurpation, and take the total period as being more than 500 years. This results in an earlier date for the Exodus. One system of dating formerly employed by some “fundamentalist” writers, with the successive periods of the book of Judges, arrives at a total of 594 years from the Exodus to the 4th year of Solomon by interpreting the 480 years as the total number of the “years of the Theocracy” during which Israel was really under God-appointed government, not counting the six periods of servitude and the three years of the usurpation of Abimelech. By overlapping Eli with the Philistine servitude and Samuel with Eli, it arrives at the x years of Joshua’s successors as 13 years by subtraction. This scheme, which requires assumptions concerning which there is no evidence, to say the least, has never gained standing in the world of Biblical scholarship.

The marginal dates that have appeared in many editions of the KJV since 1701, derived from the chronology of Archbishop Ussher, first published in 1650, place the Exodus in 1491 B.C.; the first judge, Othniel, in 1406; and the beginning of Saul’s reign in 1095. This dating is arrived at by placing the 4th year of Solomon, as the 480th from the Exodus, in 1012 B.C. This B.C. date is based on interregna between the kings, also on Ussher’s conjecture that the completion of the Temple (1004) was 1,000 years before the birth of Christ.

Many scholars regard the 480 years as merely meaning 12 generations, estimated at 40 years each. This would be equivalent to throwing out the number 480 entirely, for an estimate of 12 generations cannot be a basis for a specific time statement of an exact “480th year.”

If “in the 480th year” is not meant to refer to a specific year, but to a general approximation, how are we to know that “in the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat,” or “in the seventh year of Artaxerxes,” or “in the eleventh year of Zedekiah” is anything but an estimate? When the Bible gives exact statements of time, and on these statements can be built a detailed chronology without alteration, there seems to be no adequate reason for assuming that they are not based on exact data. It is admitted that Bible writers may use round numbers at times, especially in the case of the number 40, but such a possibility should not weigh against actual figures that harmonize with other figures to make exact synchronisms as they stand, nor is there any reason to doubt that when a writer puts an event in a certain specific year he means that very year.

It is true that many writers who do not accept the Bible as accurate history revise the figures wherever they please, to suit their own theories. Some of them reduce the time of the judges to even shorter periods by regarding 1 Kings 6:1 as an error; those who place the Exodus in the 12th or 13th century must of necessity do this. But this is not constructing a chronology based on the Bible data; it is a revision of the Bible records according to each individual’s theory. Since this commentary is intended to explain the Bible, not to revise it, any chronology incorporated into it must be based on the Biblical figures; if they cannot be explained consistently, it must be admitted that we do not have a complete Biblical chronology. Therefore the 480 years are to be included in the picture.

This chapter employs the simpler interpretation of the so-called 480 years, inclusive (the phrase is not “480 years,” but “the 480th year”), as literal and exact, ending with the 4th year of Solomon as the 480th year. The overlapping of the judges, which this reckoning requires, is accepted as a reasonable interpretation of the data, but no attempt is made to be dogmatic on the details of the judgeships. The outline in the history section shows what may have happened, but no one knows what actually did happen, nor does that fact diminish the value of the narrative for its readers.

The United Hebrew Monarchy

Reference has been made to the indefiniteness of our information on the relation of the beginning of the monarchy to the time of Samuel and the earlier judges. The Old Testament contains no clear statement as to the length of Saul’s reign, but any difference of opinion on this period would affect only the date of its beginning, for its end is fixed in relation to the reigns of David and the later line of kings.

The Reign of Saul Variouslly Interpreted - The only information given in the Bible as to the length of Saul’s rule (unless 1 Samuel 13:1 is so regarded) is the remark of the apostle Paul, made in an impromptu sermon at Antioch: “And afterward they desired a king: and God gave unto them Saul the son of Cis, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, by the space of forty years” (Acts 13:21).

Paul had just referred to two other time periods: (1) God’s deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt, when “about the time of forty years suffered he their manners in the wilderness,” and (2) another period of “about the space of four hundred and fifty years” (verses 18, 20; italics supplied).

Some have concluded that, since Paul was thinking in round numbers, as indicated by the qualifying word “about” with these two numerals, he merely omitted to repeat the modifier with the third numeral; that he would naturally use round numbers in an oral summary, for he was not writing a history, or even consulting records for these figures. Even his phrase, “about the time of forty years” in the wilderness is an example of 40 used as a round number, since the duration of the Israelites’ wandering in the wilderness, after rebelling against God at Kadesh and being turned back, was actually only 38 years.

On the other hand, the fact that the third number, unlike the first two, is not qualified by “about” leads some to think that it was meant to be an exact number in contrast with the others. If so, what period did Paul intend it to cover? Some think that it extends to the beginning of David’s rule over both Judah and Israel, more than 7 years after the death of Saul, and hence that the personal reign of Saul, in distinction from that of his house, was less than 40 years. The question as to whether Paul meant to indicate that Saul occupied the throne exactly 40 years cannot be settled, and it does not affect the historical accuracy of the account.

The Ages of Saul, David, and Jonathan - The only reason for concern with the exact length of Saul’s reign is that a total of 40 years involves apparent difficulties as to the comparative ages of Saul, David, and Jonathan, difficulties that would be avoided if 40 were a round number for a considerably shorter period. If 40 is exact, then David was born a decade after Saul came to the throne, for at the age of 30 he succeeded Saul (2 Samuel 5:4). Then, if he slew Goliath when he was as young as 18—and he could hardly have been much younger—this event took place after Saul had reigned nearly 30 years. If the battle of Michmash, in which Jonathan took a prominent part (1 Samuel 13, 14), occurred in the second

year of Saul's reign (see on 1 Samuel 13:1), as the KJV has been taken to imply (although it does not actually so state), Jonathan was presumably 18 or 20 years old about a decade before David was born. This makes the close and brotherly friendship between an 18-year-old David and a 46-year-old Jonathan seem entirely out of harmony with the narrative. Also, on this basis, Jonathan's only son, Mephibosheth (or Merib-baal; 1 Chronicles 8:34; 9:40), who was 5 years old at the time of the battle in which Saul and his sons were killed (2 Samuel 4:4; cf. 1 Samuel 29:1, 11; 31:1, 2), would have been born when Jonathan was 53. This would be rather late for Saul's heir apparent to be providing for the succession of his line. And if Jonathan was a grown man so soon after his father's accession, Saul must have been between 75 and 80, at the very least, when he was killed in battle. None of this is impossible, but it would seem to be so unusual as to lend weight to one of two views: (1) that the figure 40 does not refer to the exact length of the personal reign of Saul, or (2) that he was quite young at the time of his accession and that the battle of Michmash must have come considerably later than the second year of his reign. Either of these two explanations would allow Saul and Jonathan to be much younger, thus eliminating the apparent difficulties in their ages.

Various Explanations of Saul's Reign - If Saul's reign was less than 40 years, the question arises as to what evidence there may be for its length. Extending the 40 years to cover the time up to the coronation of David over all twelve tribes would subtract 7 1/2 years at the most. This is possible, but of course unproved.

In one instance, Josephus attributes to Saul a reign of only 20 years (*Antiquities* x. 8. 4). In another instance, he has Saul reign 18 years during Samuel's lifetime and 22 years after the death of the prophet (*Antiquities* vi. 14. 9). This latter statement shows variants in the manuscripts, two of the Latin texts reading 2 for 22, thus making this statement conform to the other. It has been suggested that the number 22 represents an emendation by a Christian copyist to make it conform to Paul's statement, but this is of course merely a conjecture. There seems to be no textual question about the statement from *Antiquities* x. 8. 4.

Now, if Saul reigned only 20 years, then David, who was 30 when he came to the throne (2 Samuel 5:4), would have been 10 years old at Saul's accession. There is general agreement that David was only about 18 when he slew Goliath; he was young enough to be left at home with the sheep instead of being in the army (1 Samuel 17:13, 14, 28, 33, 42), yet old enough to fight wild beasts (verses 34-37), and is referred to as a valiant man of war (chapter 16:18). Consequently, there would be only about eight years between the beginning of Saul's reign and the battle with Goliath. In that case, Samuel could have died about 18 years after Saul's accession. Some regard eight years as a rather short period for the events related before the Goliath incident, and similarly object to only two years between the death of Samuel and that of Saul, since David spent a year and four months of that time among the Philistines. But the interval after Samuel's death could hardly have been much more than two years, unless 1 Samuel 25 and 26 have omitted many events. The only incidents recorded between Samuel's death and David's flight to Philistia are his journey to Paran, his encounter with Nabal, and his second encounter with Saul. These incidents would not seem to require more than eight months.

If, as some think, 1 Samuel 13:1 gives the incomplete remnant of a statement of the length of Saul's reign, and the original numeral ended in two ("... and two years he reigned"; see on 1 Samuel 13:1), it could have been 22, although 32 would seem more likely as an equivalent of the round number 40. In view of

the aforementioned observations, what is to be done with Paul's statement assigning 40 years to the reign of Saul? Either this is a round number or it is not. If it is, the relative ages of David, Saul, and Jonathan can be made to appear more reasonable, but any attempt to arrive at an exact figure for the reign will be only speculation. If it is not a round number, the period is 40 years, and the unnatural disparity of ages must be accepted if we are to construct this chronology on the Bible data.

Later Chronology Not Affected - In either case, any difference of opinion on the duration of Saul's reign has no effect on the date of the end of that reign or on the dates of the reigns of David and the later kings. Regardless of which scheme of chronology is preferred for the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, the B.C. dating pivots on synchronisms in the latter part of the period; consequently shortening Saul's reign would merely move his accession later, and allow that much more time for the judges.

The Reign of David - There is no question about the length of David's reign. Here 40 is obviously not a round number, for it is the sum of 7 and 33, and there is actual mention of an event in the 40th year of David (1 Chronicles 26:31). The extra six months (2 Samuel 5:4, 5) offer no problem. It could be possible that David's entire reign, from the time that he became king in Hebron until he died, was exactly 40 years and 6 months; it is not necessary, however, to suppose this, since the reigns of ancient kings were customarily counted by calendar years; and if one died at any time in his 40th calendar year, he was said to have reigned 40 years, as will be explained later. It is more likely that the six months were his "beginning of reign," or "accession year"—the interval between his coming to the throne and the next New Year's Day, from which his "year 1" would begin. If the Philistines went up against Saul in the plain of Jezreel at the usual season when "kings go out to battle" (1 Chronicles 20:1), Saul's death, followed by David's accession in Hebron, would have occurred in the spring, and David's first full year of reign would have begun about six months later, at the beginning of the year in the autumn.

Solomon Made King by David - At the end of David's reign, "when David was old and full of days, he made Solomon his son king over Israel" (1 Chronicles 23:1). At this time, he appointed officers for the Temple service and for the affairs of Israel "in all the business of the Lord, and in the service of the king" (chapter 26:30). This seems to have taken place "in the fortieth year of the reign of David" (verse 31). In the last chapter of the book the reign is summarized as 7 years in Hebron and 33 in Jerusalem (1 Chronicles 29:27). This would imply that Solomon's joint reign with his father continued for part of the 40th year, for if it had extended into the 41st, David would have been reckoned as reigning 41 years. This 40th year must have been counted also as Solomon's "accession year," or "year of the beginning of the reign."

Solomon's Years From Autumn to Autumn - The reign of Solomon furnishes an important clue to the reckoning of the regnal years, that is, the years of the king's reign, as beginning in the autumn, in his day at least. It is explained in the section on the Hebrew calendar that there were two beginnings of the year: The religious year began with the 1st of Abib (Nisan), in the spring, and the civil year with the 1st of Ethanim (Tishri), (See note) in the autumn. Since the months were always numbered from the spring, the civil fall-to-fall year began with the 7th month, with the numbers running 7–12 followed by 1–6. Thus, the first month came after the middle of the civil year.

NOTE: Rather than confuse the reader with alternate names, the months will be referred to hereafter by the more familiar (and still used) postexilic names—Nisan for the 1st month, Tishri the 7th, etc., even though it is recognized that these were not used until after the period of the kings ended.

The Temple was begun in the 2nd month of the 4th year of Solomon, and was completed in the 8th month of the 11th year (1 Kings 6:1, 37, 38). In view of the well-attested fact that the ancients were in the habit of reckoning inclusively, it seems surprising that an interval from the 4th to the 11th year should not be expressed here as 8 years. But since the beginning and ending dates are given, it is to be presumed that the reckoning was not by complete regnal years, but by anniversary years, that is, years reckoned from the date of the event that marks the beginning, the 2nd day of the 2nd month. If the 7 years are reckoned inclusively from the 2nd month of the 4th year of the reign, the completion of the Temple falls in the 11th year of the reign if the regnal years begin in the fall, but not if they begin in the spring. This has been understood as evidence that Solomon's regnal years were reckoned from the autumn, presumably Tishri 1.

Solomon's Fourth Year Used as Basis for Exodus Date - This date of the beginning of the building of the Temple on "the second day of the second month, in the fourth year of his reign" (2 Chronicles 3:2) is important in relation to the time of the Exodus. According to the chronology of the kings employed in this commentary, the 40th and last year of Solomon's reign was 931/30 B.C., counted from autumn to autumn; therefore the 4th year of the reign, 36 years earlier, was 967/66 B.C., also beginning presumably with the autumn New Year's Day, the first of Tishri, the 7th month. Since the Hebrews always numbered their months from the spring, even though the civil year began in the fall, the 2nd month, Zif, came in the spring of 966 B.C.

But this event in the month of Zif is also dated "in the four hundred and eightieth year after the children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt" (1 Kings 6:1). Thus, we have a synchronism between two dating scales—the regnal years of Solomon and the years of the Exodus era. Since the deliverance from Egypt took place in the middle of the 1st month in the 1st year of the Exodus reckoning, that departure can be placed 479 years earlier than the 1st month of the 480th year, that is, in the spring of 1445 B.C. Thus Solomon's reign, as dated from the later reigns of the divided kingdom, gives us in turn a date for the Exodus if we accept the 480th year as an exact figure.

Methods and Principles of Reckoning

Before considering the period of the divided kingdom, which followed the death of Solomon, it may be well to pause for an explanation of the methods used in reckoning ancient reigns, and of certain terms and principles that will be used in the later discussion of the reigns of Israel and Judah.

Chronology Built Upon Synchronisms - The chronological data in the books of Kings are given mostly in two types of time statements aligning the reigns of the two neighboring kingdoms of Judah and Israel, that is, (1) accession synchronisms, or statements dating the accession of one king in a certain regnal year of the contemporary ruler in the other nation; and (2) the lengths of the reigns. A typical example is seen in the record of the accession of Amaziah of Judah during the reign of Jehoash (Joash) of Israel: "In the second year of Joash ... king of Israel reigned Amaziah ... king of Judah. He was twenty and five years old when he began to reign, and reigned twenty and nine years in Jerusalem" (2 Kings 14:1, 2).

We are told later that Amaziah outlived Jehoash 15 years (verse 17); and then comes the next accession synchronism, the statement of the accession of the next king of Israel, Jeroboam II, during Amaziah's reign: "In the fifteenth year of Amaziah ... king of Judah Jeroboam ... king of Israel began to reign in Samaria, and reigned forty and one years" (verse 23).

Similar synchronisms are given for the other kings. Since the accession of each is synchronized with a regnal year of his contemporary neighbor, and the length of each reign is given, it is possible to construct an outline of the chronology of the two kingdoms based on these interlocking synchronisms. A graphic method of constructing such chronologies is to start with two parallel scales of years in diagrammatic form, and to lay out on them the two series of reigns of Israel and Judah so that (1) the accession of each king is synchronized with the corresponding year of the contemporary ruler of the other kingdom, and (2) the recorded length of each reign is allowed for. If the pattern is correct, the end of each reign and the beginning of the next will come in the prescribed year of the reign of the other kingdom as recorded in the Bible.

Sometimes the figures in Kings can be interpreted in only one way; then the alignment is easy to determine. But in other instances more than one interpretation may be made, and various possibilities must be tried out. To begin with, this is largely a trial-and-error procedure. Where the lengths of the reigns do not fit the scheme, many have concluded that the text was erroneous. But it must be considered that there is more than one method of reckoning involved, that Israel and Judah did not necessarily use the same systems. In order to work intelligently it is necessary first to understand the methods and principles of reckoning that may have been used by the writer of Kings or in his sources. To illustrate from the time statements just quoted, relating to Amaziah and his contemporaries, the following questions must be answered—and they are not so simple as they may seem at first glance.

How did the writer count the 15 years that Amaziah lived after the death of Joash? (See next section.)

If Amaziah reigned 29 years, in what year of his reign did he die?

What is meant by his 15th year?

When does a king's "first year" begin?

Did the 15th year of Amaziah in Judah exactly coincide with the Israelite year in which Jeroboam II came to the throne?

The task of finding the answers to such questions is complicated by the fact that Judah and Israel did not employ identical systems of reckoning. The general principles of ancient reckoning that explain these questions will be found in the following paragraphs.

Years Counted by Inclusive Reckoning - As already pointed out, the common mode of counting employed in the Bible seems to have been inclusive reckoning, that is, counting both the first and the last unit of time in calculating an interval. This method was also used generally by other ancient nations, as is shown unmistakably by source documents. An Egyptian inscription recording the death of a priestess on the 4th day of the 12th month relates that her successor arrived on the 15th, "when 12 days had elapsed." Today, we would say that when 12 days had elapsed after the 4th, the date would be the 16th. The Greeks followed the same inclusive method. They called the Olympiad, or the four-year period between the Olympic Games, a pentaeteris (five-year period), and used other similar numerical terms. The Romans also, in common usage, reckoned inclusively; they had *nundinae* (from *nonus*, ninth), or market days, every ninth day, inclusive, actually every eight days, as indicated on ancient calendars by the letters, A through H.

Of course, mathematicians and astronomers were aware that the reckoning was mathematically inexact, but it persisted in common parlance, as it has even down to the present day in the Orient. Modern vestiges in the West are the phrase “eight days,” meaning a week in some European languages; the Catholic term “octave” of a festival, meaning the day coming one week after the holy day; the musical intervals, such as octave, third, fifth, etc.; and even the medical term “tertian fever,” meaning a fever recurring every other day.

The clearest Biblical demonstration of inclusive counting is in the New Testament (see on Acts 10:30 where a period of 72 hours is reckoned as “four days ago,” not “three”), but an Old Testament example is in 2 Kings 18:9, 10. The siege of Samaria lasted from the fourth to the sixth year of Hezekiah, which is equated with the seventh to the ninth year of Hoshea, and yet the city is said to have been taken “at the end of three years.” In modern usage, we would say two years, by straight subtraction. Obviously, the Bible writer reckoned inclusively (years four, five, and six totaling three years).

A Hebrew boy was circumcised when “eight days old” (Genesis 17:12), that is, “in the eighth day” (Levites 12:3). Similarly, Luke speaks of circumcision “on the eighth day” or “when eight days were accomplished” (Luke 1:59; 2:21). Evidently “when eight days were accomplished” (or “at the end of eight days,” RSV) does not mean eight full days from the date of birth, but eight inclusive.

Jeroboam II of Israel succeeded his father Jehoash in the 15th year of Amaziah of Judah (2 Kings 14:23), and Amaziah “lived after the death of Jehoash ... of Israel fifteen years” (2 Kings 14:17). A modern reader would mentally add 15 to 15, reaching Amaziah’s 30th year, yet Amaziah reigned only 29 years (verse 2). Inclusive reckoning is again the most logical explanation, since 15 years, inclusive, from the 15th year is the 29th, in which he evidently died.

There are other examples. When, at the death of Solomon, Rehoboam was petitioned to lighten the tax burden, he told the people to depart “for three days” (1 Kings 12:5) and then return for his decision “after three days” (2 Chronicles 10:5). They came “the third day, as the king had appointed, saying, Come to me again the third day” (1 Kings 12:12; cf. 2 Chronicles 10:12). Esther asked the Jews of Shushan to fast, and by implication, to pray, for her before she went in to the king unbidden, and then she approached the king “on the third day” (Esther 4:16; 5:1). Obviously, a period of “three days” ended on the third day, not after the completion of the three days, as we would reckon it.

All this serves to explain the supposed difficulty in the three days between the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. The texts are as follows:

“In three days”	“After three days”	“The third day”
Matthew 26:61; 27:40	27:63 (12:40, & 3 nights)	16:21; 17:23; 20:19; 27:64
Mark 14:58 (within)	8:31	9:31; 10:34
Luke		9:22; 18:33; 24:7, 21, 46
John 2:19-21		

It is obvious from these texts that “in three days,” “after three days,” and even “three days and three nights” are all equivalent to “on the third day.” One writer (Matthew) uses all three phrases for the same period. The interval from Friday afternoon to Sunday morning is three days, by inclusive reckoning. Since it is clear that this mode of counting was the common practice in Bible times, and widespread in many countries, it is useless to try to understand this period as three full 24-hour days, according to the modern Western habit of counting. To do so violates both historical usage and Biblical statement, and creates a difficulty that would not exist if the ordinary usage of common speech and of examples in the Bible be taken into account.

The Length of a King’s Reign - Just as the common mode of expression made Noah 600 years old in his 600th year, or a child 8 days old on his 8th day, and just as a period of 3 days or 3 years ends on the 3rd day or in the 3rd year, although the 3rd day or year is not yet completed, so a reign of 25 years was one that ended in the 25th year.

Asa of Judah was recorded as having ruled 41 years, yet he died in his 41st year (1 Kings 15:9, 10; 2 Chronicles 16:13); note also the end of Zedekiah’s 11-year reign in his 11th year (2 Kings 24:18; 2 Kings 25:2-7). This is also demonstrated by the Judah-Israel synchronisms, and was customary in Babylon and Egypt, as evidenced by documents brought to light by archeologists.

This was somewhat akin to inclusive reckoning, although the total of a reign was not always true inclusive reckoning. There were two methods of counting regnal years, one of which eliminated the inclusive numbering, and so kept the total number of years correct, as will be explained next. But the system of regnal years was not ordinary folk usage; it was a specialized form of calendar reckoning, primarily chronological in purpose.

Regnal Years Are Calendar Years - When the ancients dated events in a certain year of a king’s reign, they were using a calendar dating formula. They were not concerned with how long that ruler had been on the throne when the event occurred, but they used the regnal-year number as the regular designation for that calendar year. This was the common method of identifying the year, for they had no long-term era like our B.C.-A.D. dating. Accordingly, the regnal year coincided with the civil year, beginning on New Year’s Day. The various nations had different calendars, and different New Year’s Days, but the system of counting reigns by their respective calendar years was followed in Babylonia, Assyria, and Egypt, and evidently by the Hebrews also. It seems to have been taken for granted in the ancient Near East.

Although a king’s regnal years were equated with whole calendar years, the first and last of his kingship would be incomplete unless he happened to come to the throne on New Year’s Day and die on the anniversary of his accession. Hence an adjustment had to be made, and there were two methods of making this adjustment as described in the immediately following paragraphs.

Accession-Year Method of Reckoning Reigns - If King A died during his 35th year, and was succeeded by King B, all documents written in the first part of the year, up to A’s death, would have been dated in the such and such day and month of the 35th year of King A, but during the rest of that year they would be dated in the name of his successor, King B, and the first New Year’s Day in the new reign would usher in a new regnal year of King B. The difference in the two methods was concerned with the unexpired portion of the year between the accession and the following New Year’s Day.

In Babylonia, for example, this partial year would be called King B's "year of beginning of reign," now known as accession year; and the full calendar year beginning on the next New Year's Day (Nisan 1) was numbered the first year of the reign. Thus in a series of reigns, the year 35 of King A would be followed by the year 1 of King B. This is referred to as the accession-year method of dating, because the interval from the date of accession to the end of the calendar year is called the accession year, and is not numbered. This method is also sometimes called postdating, since the beginning of what was called the first year was postdated, or postponed, until the first day of the next calendar year following the new king's coming to the throne.

Non-Accession-Year Method of Reckoning Reigns - By the other method, used at times in Egypt, the new king began dating documents in his "year 1" as soon as he ascended the throne, and the year beginning at the next New Year's Day (Thoth 1 in Egypt) was called year 2. Thus the same year that began as the 35th of King A would end as year 1 of King B, and A's year 35 would be followed by B's year 2, not year 1. This causes an overlap of 1 year in reckoning a series of reigns. It adds an extra year for each reign, for it is the equivalent of inclusive reckoning, numbering both the first and the last year of every reign, when actually each king's "first year" is only the unexpired part of the last year of his predecessor. Since there is no period called accession year before year 1, this is called the non-accession-year method, or antedating.

Both Systems Used in the Book of Kings - These two methods are well documented from ancient Egyptian and Babylonian records. The use of regnal-year dating is shown in the Bible by a number of date formulas. For example, Jerusalem was besieged on the 10th of the 10th month in the 9th year of Zedekiah's reign (2 Kings 25:1); and "in the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month, which is the nineteenth year of king Nebuchadnezzar" (verse 8), Nebuzaradan came and burned the Temple. There is no indication as to whether these time statements involve the accession-year or non-accession-year reckoning. But certain synchronisms in the book of Kings, in equating a year of a king of Judah with a certain year of a king of Israel, seem to point to the conclusion that both Hebrew kingdoms used both these systems at different times. At the division, after Solomon's death, Judah seems to have been using the accession-year and Israel the non-accession-year method.

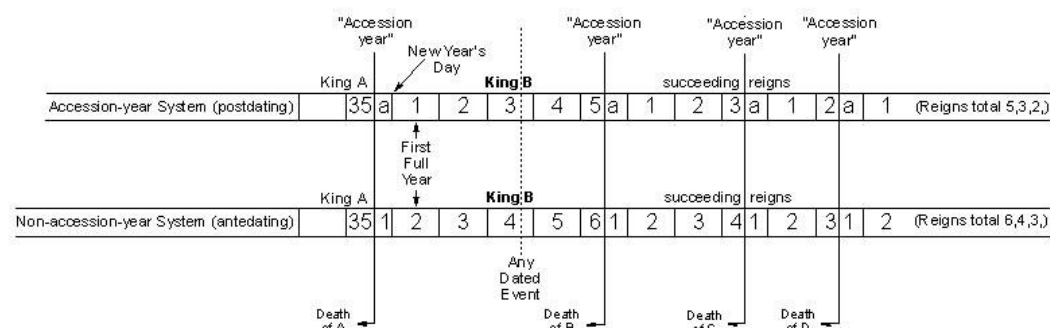
In order to survey briefly the differences between these two methods of regnal reckoning, let us return to the hypothetical King A, who dies in his 35th year, and is succeeded by King B. A diagram will illustrate the differing effects of the two methods on the numbering of B's reign, on the dating of events by regnal-year numbers, and on the totals of B's and succeeding reigns.

The six paragraphs following the diagram will summarize the results

- I. In the accession-year system (upper), after the end of the year in which one king dies and the next ascends the throne, the first New Year's Day of the new reign ushers in the year 1 of the new king.
- II. In the non-accession-year system (lower), however, the year of death and accession is followed by year 2 of the new king, and so on.
Therefore, it follows, as shown by the diagram, that:
- III. A king's year 2, for example, will come one year later if he is using the accession-year (or postdating) system than it would if he were using the non-accession-year (or antedating) method.

- IV. If two scribes, using the two differing methods, date the same event (see Event on diagram) each in his own system, the scribe who uses the accession-year system will give that year a number lower by one than will the scribe using the non-accession-year system.
- V. The number of years recorded as the length of a reign is lower by one if the accession-year method is used than if the non-accession-year method is used.
- VI. In a series of reigns, the sum of the regnal years for the series if counted by the accession-year system will preserve the correct total of the years elapsed; but the non-accession-year reckoning will add an extra year for each reign and thus produce a total larger than the actual number of years elapsed.

Accession-Year and Non-Accession-Year Methods Illustrated



The Spring and Fall New Year - It has been explained that the Hebrews had two year reckonings, that when the numbering of the months from the spring (Nisan) was introduced in connection with the series of religious feasts at the time of the Exodus, the older reckoning of the year from the autumn (Tishri) was retained as the civil year. There is Scriptural evidence that Solomon counted the years of his reign from the autumn, and that Judah continued the practice. The record says nothing of whether the northern kingdom of Israel counted the regnal years of their kings from the spring or the fall, but there are indications, from some of the synchronisms of Kings, that Israel used the spring-beginning year.

Thus when the accession year of a king of Judah, for example, is synchronized with a certain year of a king of Israel (according to Judah's system of numbering), that means that the last six months of Judah's year overlaps the first six months of Israel's corresponding year, or vice versa. This alignment differs in various reigns, according to the date of accession. If the accession occurs in the summer, the regnal year of Judah comes six months earlier than the corresponding year of Israel, because Judah's autumn New Year's Day (Tishri 1) arrives first in the new reign, while Israel's next calendar year begins on Nisan 1 in the following spring. If, however, the king comes to the throne in winter, the next New Year's Day after

his accession is that of Israel, in the spring, and consequently his regnal year as reckoned in Israel begins six months ahead of the Judah fall-to-fall year.

Two Methods of Constructing a Chronology of the Kings - One who keeps in mind these principles of ancient reckoning in connection with the chronology of this period should be able to apply these principles to the problem of working out a tentative chronology of the kings of Israel and Judah from the Biblical data. But there are differing interpretations of the synchronisms, and many difficulties. Since the accession synchronisms frequently appear to disagree with the data for the lengths of the reigns, many Old Testament scholars have come to the conclusion that these difficulties indicate that the figures in the narrative are late additions to the text, largely erroneous, and of little or no value for chronology. Actually, when their true nature is understood, they are found to be amazingly consistent.

The two lines must be adjusted by assuming either certain coregencies between father and son or certain interregna between reigns, and, in addition, by allowing for different modes of reckoning. If the reigns will not fit together unless Judah is reckoned by the accession-year method and Israel by the non-accession-year method, it can be assumed, as a working hypothesis, that this was the way in which the respective kingdoms were computing their reigns at that time. And if a whole series of reigns can be interpreted in terms of such a system, the probability of the correctness of the pattern is strengthened.

Interregna Versus Coregencies - The alternate methods of reconciling the difference between the total lengths of the reigns of Israel and Judah have resulted in two types of chronological schemes of the period. If, when the synchronisms require either a co regency in one line or an interregnum in the other, the former is more often used, the result is a shorter chronology of the period; whereas if the latter is more often used, there is a longer chronology. The merits of either method must be determined by the degree to which the scheme fits all known facts, Biblical and non-Biblical. Even between points where a certain series of reigns began together and ended together in both kingdoms (as the period from the death of Solomon, when the kingdoms were first divided, to the assassination of the rulers of both Israel and Judah by Jehu), the recorded totals of the reigns do not agree. Moreover, in the period after Jehu the inequality grows greater until, at the end of the northern kingdom, the sum of the years recorded for the kings of Israel is 20 years less than the sum of the years of Judah for the same period. In the light of this sort of discrepancy, there is no way of reconciling the lengths of the regnal lines of the two kingdoms unless we assume that either the apparently longer line included overlapped reigns, or the shorter line had gaps between reigns.

If the first is true, there must have been occasions when the heir was placed on the throne with his father before the latter's death, and the total years recorded for the son included the years of his co regency as well as his sole reign. In that case, the total lengths of all the reigns would exceed by some years the total time elapsed.

If the second is true, then it becomes obvious that in the shorter line there must have been an occasional interregnum when there was, for one reason or another, a disturbance at the death of a king that prevented the immediate accession of a successor. If such periods without a king were disregarded in the figures given for the successive reigns, the total time elapsed would have been longer than the records show.

We must assume one or the other; either the longer line must be shortened by coregencies, or the shorter line must be lengthened by interregna, or possibly both procedures are to be used.

As has been pointed out, the essential chronological data are given for each king, generally in the account of the beginning of his reign; and the data are of two kinds:

- (1) the accession synchronism that dates the beginning of the reign in a certain year of the ruler of the other Hebrew kingdom (“Ahaziah the son of Ahab began to reign over Israel in Samaria the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah”; 1 Kings 22:51), and
- (2) the length of the reign (“[Ahaziah] reigned two years over Israel”).

It has been noted that there is an apparent difference of one year between the accession-year reckoning (or postdating) and the non-accession-year reckoning (or antedating). Whenever, in addition to this difference, any of these time statements appear to conflict with the pattern of the other reigns, the explanation may be that there was either a co regency or an interregnum not mentioned in the narrative. Unless there is some hint in the text as to the political situation at the time, there is no inherent reason for supposing that one occurred rather than the other. The solution that brings harmony between the synchronisms in the Bible record must be accepted. This sort of adjustment does not discard the Biblical data; it merely explains them by assuming that the record did not give all the details, some of which must be inferred from the figures given. Consequently, opinions differ as to which solution is more likely.

The choice between interregna and coregencies, that is, between intervening gaps and overlapped reigns, results in assigning a longer or a shorter total period to the two Hebrew kingdoms. Since there is virtually no disagreement as to the end of the period in Nebuchadnezzar’s day, the two methods produce an earlier or later B.C. date for the beginning point (the death of Solomon).

Older Chronologies Employ Interregna - Older chronologists have preferred to employ interregna; by assuming gaps in the shorter regnal line they have lengthened it to match the longer one. The actual occurrence of interregna is within the bounds of possibility, especially in cases where the end of a dynasty might leave a gap without an immediate successor. However, interregna are much less likely to occur than coregencies; for in any disturbance that breaks the hereditary line it is probable that some one strong leader can make himself master of the situation. Even if there were a delay in the transfer of power, the successful contender would likely claim the whole period for his own reign. (See note) On the other hand, coregencies represent an established practice, attested in the history of several ancient nations.

NOTE: The two interregna in Ptolemy’s Canon are irrelevant because they were not true interregna, but belonged to Sennacherib’s reign.

The typical chronology of the Hebrew kings based on interregna, and thus lengthened by gaps, is the scheme of B.C. dates (derived from Ussher) incorporated into the Bible marginal notes in many editions of the KJV; and there are one or two other dating systems that are somewhat similar to it. Ussher, writing 300 years ago, did not have access to source documents for the chronology of the period. He had Ptolemy’s Canon, but departed from it where he preferred the dates of the Greek historians of the classical period. Aside from his arbitrary placing of the completion of Solomon’s Temple 1,000 years before the birth of Christ (he dates it 1004 B.C.; for his 4004 B.C. date for creation), his chronology of the Hebrew kings was determined largely by dead reckoning. In his day the Assyrian records were unknown.

Those who through the years came to accept his system of Biblical chronology were concerned only with the internal harmony of the data for the two Hebrew kingdoms. Ussher's scheme of dating came to be known as the "Biblical" chronology, and many a reader of the English Bible regarded the marginal dates as almost a part of the inspired text.

Later Use of Coregencies - Then came the unearthing and deciphering of the cuneiform sources, a wealth of Babylonian and Assyrian documents furnishing chronological data contemporary with the Hebrew monarchies. It became evident that the new data did not harmonize with the older chronology based on interregna, which would put the Hebrew kings earlier than their Assyrian contemporaries. The discovery of the Assyrian limmu (eponym) lists resulted in a division of opinion. Some earlier authorities held that the Assyrian records, admittedly incomplete for many periods, had gaps in the chronological lists that affected the synchronism of Assyrian with Hebrew rulers; some said that both the Assyrian and the "Biblical" chronology were correct, but that the names in the Assyrian records translated as those of Biblical kings, such as Ahab and Menahem, were mistaken identifications.

NOTE: Jules Oppert (1868) and others postulated the Assyrian gaps; George Smith (1875) divorced the Hebrew kings from the Assyrian annals.

On the other hand, attempts were made to work out a Hebrew chronology by using coregencies instead of interregna, thus shortening the longer line of reigns. This shorter chronology could incorporate the new Assyrian dating, which had become generally accepted as astronomically fixed by an eclipse, and could be fitted in with the beginning of Ptolemy's Canon in the closing years of the Assyrian Empire. Many Old Testament scholars gave up the task as hopeless and declared the Biblical data erroneous. They despaired of the internal harmony of the accession synchronisms and lengths of the reigns as recorded in the Bible, and also of the external harmony of those data with the cuneiform documents.

Later writers attempted by various methods to construct a consistent Biblical chronology that could be aligned with the accepted dating of the cuneiform documents. Some discarded the Biblical accession synchronisms and tried to keep the figures for the lengths of the reigns; others did the opposite. Since most of them have freely revised the Biblical figures in order to harmonize them, on the assumption that the numbers have been altered considerably in transmission, their results have consequently varied according to their conjectural revisions.

Tentative Chronology Used in This Section - For the purpose of dating the Hebrew kings in this section, a chronology has been employed that offers the prospect of assigning at least tentative B.C. dates to all the reigns. In the system adopted there is not only an internal harmony of nearly all the Biblical time statements—both accession synchronisms and figures for the lengths of the reigns—but also an external harmony between the Biblical and the Assyrian chronology. However, any discussion of the B.C. dating of these reigns will be deferred until after the explanation of the four working hypotheses on which this dating is based—hypotheses derived from experimental alignment of the reigns of the two kingdoms of Judah and Israel.

Most of the basic chronological principles of regnal reckoning used in these hypotheses have been used for decades and employed in various combinations by different writers. But no one has yet succeeded in combining them in such a manner as to construct a consistent chronological scheme of the kings that will

be in complete harmony with all the Biblical figures and the Assyrian data as well. Therefore, most writers have revised the accession synchronisms or the lengths of the reigns or both.

The value of the particular combination of these principles in the four fundamental hypotheses enumerated below is that with them as a basis a system of dating the reigns can be constructed that succeeds in harmonizing nearly all of the Biblical texts, a result not achieved by any other scheme of chronology of the kings.

The scheme of regnal dating used herein combines two very similar systems, those of two contributors to this commentary, Edwin R. Thiele and Siegfried H. Horn.

Note: Edwin R. Thiele, The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings (1st ed., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951; 2nd ed., Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1965), an expansion of his article "The Chronology of the Kings of Judah and Israel," Journal of Near Eastern Studies, III (1944), 137-186, and based on his doctoral dissertation); Siegfried H. Horn, "The Chronology of Hezekiah's Reign," Andrews University Seminary Studies II (1964) 40-52.

Horn, whose chronology is published only in part, worked out the greater portion of his scheme independently of Thiele but came to the same conclusions on many points and adopted the latter's findings on a number of others, though differing in his interpretation of the period of Hezekiah (Horn, op. cit., pp. 45-49; cf. his chart, facing p. 40, with Thiele's chart in his 2nd ed., p. 149).

It incorporates the basic principles and hypotheses used by both of them and agrees with most of Thiele's dates, but it follows Horn's chronology more closely in the one period on which they do not agree, that is, in the proposed solution of the problem of harmonizing certain apparently discrepant synchronisms connected with the reign of Hezekiah.

Since one of these writers finds it necessary to hypothesize a late editorial readjustment of several synchronisms, and the other has to leave one synchronism as a yet-unsolved problem, it can be said that neither has yet constructed an entire system of Hebrew regnal chronology that utilizes every time statement exactly as it appears in the books of Kings. Yet these two men have come nearer to doing so than any other scholar.

Thus for all practical purposes a system of Hebrew regnal dates can be arrived at that is in harmony with the time statements of the books of Kings (the one exception having been noted above), and also with the chronology of the cuneiform sources. This is possible if the Judah-Israel accession synchronisms and the recorded lengths of the reigns are interpreted according to the following four hypotheses (see Thiele's chapter 2 and Horn's article, pages 42, 43; see note above):

1. That in the kingdom of Judah the years of a king's reign were reckoned as beginning in the autumn (presumably by the civil calendar year beginning with Tishri 1), while at the same time in the kingdom of Israel the regnal years were reckoned by a spring-to-spring calendar (probably beginning with Nisan 1).
2. That Israel began to use the non-accession-year system at the division of the kingdom, after the death of Solomon, but later changed to the accession-year system; that Judah, on the other hand, began with the accession-year system, changed over to the non-accession-year system, and later returned to its original method.
3. That the scribes of both kingdoms, recording the accession of their own kings as taking place in certain years of the rulers of the other kingdom, seem to have each numbered the years of the

neighboring kings by the system of reckoning (accession-year or non-accession-year) that was used in his own country rather than that used in the neighboring kingdom.

4. That in both kingdoms coregencies between father and son were rather frequent occurrences, but that no interregna are indicated in the two Hebrew kingdoms.

With the exception of the fall-to-fall regnal year for Judah, for which the direct Biblical evidence will be noted, all these hypotheses have been arrived at experimentally. When a chronology of the period is constructed on this basis, the synchronisms between years of both kingdoms work out almost completely, avoiding difficulties that arise in working them out in other ways. These results do not eliminate the possibility that someone may in the future discover a complete scheme of the reigns with a different pattern, but at present the four hypotheses here listed seem to offer the best working basis for the reconstruction of the ancient reckoning of these reigns.

Relationships of Reigns in Divided Kingdom

The Bible Data for the Reigns - From the death of Solomon, when the kingdoms of Judah and Israel were separated, the books of Kings introduce each king of Israel or Judah with a fixed formula in which the year of his accession to the throne is synchronized with the corresponding year of the contemporary ruler of the other Hebrew kingdom, followed by the length of his reign and—usually, in the case of Judah—the age of the king at the time of his accession. For example, “In the twenty and seventh year of Jeroboam [II] king of Israel began Azariah son of Amaziah king of Judah to reign. Sixteen years old was he when he began to reign, and he reigned two and fifty years in Jerusalem” (2 Kings 15:1, 2).

The following tabulation of the kings arranged in the order in which they are introduced in the books of Kings gives the accession data and lengths of reigns.

Bible Data for the Reigns of Judah and Israel

Ruler	Kingdom	Accession Synchronism	Years of Reign		
			1 Kings		1 Kings
Rehoboam	Judah		12:1	17	14:21
Jeroboam I	Israel		12:20	22	14:20
Abijam	Judah	18th of Jeroboam	15:1	3	15:2
Asa	Judah	20th of Jeroboam	15:9	41	15:10
Nadab	Israel	2nd of Asa	15:25	2	15:25
Baasha	Israel	3rd of Asa	15:28	24	15:33

Elah	Israel	26th of Asa	16:8	2	16:8
Zimri	Israel	27th of Asa	16:10	(7 days)	16:15
Tibni	Israel		16:21		
Omri	Israel	31st of Asa	16:23	12	16:23
Ahab	Israel	38th of Asa	16:29	22	16:29
Jehoshaphat	Judah	4th of Ahab	22:41	25	22:42
Ahaziah	Israel	17th of Jehoshaphat	22:51	2	22:51
			II Kings		II Kings
Joram	Israel	2nd of Jehoram	1:17		
Joram	Israel	18th of Jehoshaphat	3:1	12	3:1
Jehoram	Judah	5th of Joram	8:16	8	8:17
Ahaziah	Judah	12th (11th) of Joram	8:25 (9:29)	1	8:26
Jehu	Israel		9:12,13	28	10:36
Athaliah	Judah		11:1,3	7	11:3,4
Joash	Judah	7th of Jehu	12:1	40	12:1
Jehoahaz	Israel	23rd of Joash	13:1	17	13:1
Jehoash	Israel	37th of Joash	13:10	16	13:10
Amaziah	Judah	2nd of Jehoash	14:1	29	14:2
Jeroboam (II)	Israel	15th of Amaziah	14:23	41	14:2
Azariah (Uzziah)	Judah	27th of Jeroboam	15:1	52	15:2
Zachariah	Israel	38th of Azariah	15:8	(6 months)	15:8
Shallum	Israel	39th of Azariah	15:13	(1 month)	15:13
Menahem	Israel	39th of Azariah	15:17	10	15:17
Pekahiah	Israel	50th of Azariah	15:23	2	15:23
Pekah	Israel	52nd of Azariah	15:27	20	15:27

Hoshea	Israel	20th of Jotham	15:30		
Hoshea	Israel	12th of Ahaz	17:1	9	17:1
Jotham	Judah	2nd of Pekah	15:32	16 (20)	15:33 (30)
Ahaz	Judah	17th of Pekah	16:1	16	16:2
Hezekiah	Judah	3rd of Hoshea	18:1	29	18:2
Manasseh	Judah		21:1	55	21:1
Amon	Judah		21:19	2	21:19
Josiah	Judah		22:1	31	22:1
Jehoahaz	Judah		23:31	(3 months)	23:31
Jehoiakim	Judah		23:36	11	23:36
Jehoiachin	Judah		24:8	(3 months)	24:8
Zedekiah	Judah		24:17	11	24:18

Difficulties in Harmonizing the Reigns - With all this information, the construction of an exact chronology of the period of the kings would seem to be an easy task. But often the accession of one king, as dated in a specific year of another, seems to be out of harmony with the data for the length of the reigns. The various attempts to harmonize the reigns and to solve the difficulties have given rise to so many revisions of the data to suit individual theories, ignoring the details of the Biblical record, that the result is, in most cases, a series of conjectures rather than a systematic chronology based on the source material.

But recent study of the chronological methods of the various ancient nations, derived from a wealth of archeological documents dated according to ancient calendars, has shown that the data in the books of the Kings can be worked into a reasonable chronology without the drastic revisions referred to. When the basic principles of these synchronisms are arrived at inductively from the Biblical data, and applied to the problem, many of the supposed difficulties vanish. After a survey of general principles and methods of regnal reckoning and their specific applications to the Hebrew kings, the next step will be to explain thereby some of the main points in the outline of the period under consideration. Of course, no detailed, step-by-step analysis of all the reigns will be attempted in this summary.

The four general hypotheses already enumerated are explained and applied in the following paragraphs.

Judah's Year Begins in Fall, Israel's in Spring - There is evidence in the Bible that the kings of Judah reckoned their regnal years from the fall—presumably Tishri 1—not only in the time of Solomon, but also in the reign of Josiah. During repairs on the Temple, in the 18th year of Josiah's reign, the workmen found a copy of the book of the Law. Upon reading the scroll the king instituted a mighty reform and held

a great Passover, the like of which had not been seen in the history of the divided kingdom. Now the Passover comes on the 14th of Nisan, the first month of the religious year, beginning in the spring; but in this case both the beginning of the Temple repair and the great Passover took place in the 18th year (2 Kings 22:3, 5; 2 Kings 23:23). Since it is evident that all the events described in these two chapters could not have taken place in the first two weeks of the year, obviously the 18th year did not begin with Nisan. Judah must have employed the civil calendar year beginning with Tishri. The fall reckoning would allow six months for the events described above.

These observations have long been recognized by many scholars as evidence for the fall-to-fall regnal year in Judah. Since there is evidence of such a reckoning in the time of Solomon, and again in the time of Josiah, there is no reason to doubt that the year was so reckoned throughout the history of Judah. It is interesting to note that the synchronisms between the reigns of the northern and the southern kingdoms can be harmonized on the basis of such a reckoning for Judah, whereas certain difficulties arise if we try to use a spring-to-spring year for Judah.

On the other hand, although there is no evidence in the text of the Bible, the synchronisms between the reigns of the two kingdoms seem to indicate that Israel used a year beginning in the spring. Many scholars who have reckoned these reigns by various methods have assumed that numerous apparent discrepancies in the synchronisms are due to errors in the Biblical text, and hence do not believe a reconciliation possible, or do not attempt to achieve one. Since the use of a spring-beginning year in Israel alongside a fall-to-fall year for Judah eliminates many of the supposed discrepancies, this sort of regnal reckoning is the more probable. Until someone produces a better scheme based on a different principle, it is assumed that this method, since it works best, is to be preferred.

A possible reason offered for the spring year in Israel is that Jeroboam, the founder of the northern kingdom, who had been a political refugee in Egypt, may have been influenced by the Egyptian New Year which, in its rotation through the seasons began in the spring in Jeroboam's day. Or he may have chosen the spring New Year's Day instead of Tishri 1, in the autumn, merely in order to be different from Judah, just as he set up a new priesthood and inaugurated a feast in the eighth month in place of the old feast of the seventh month (1 Kings 12:30-33).

Accession-Year and Non-Accession-Year Systems - Evidence is found in the synchronisms that in the early years of the divided kingdoms Judah was using the accession-year system of reckoning and Israel the non-accession-year system.

Rehoboam and Jeroboam began to reign approximately together after the death of Solomon, and Ahaziah of Judah and Joram of Israel died at the same time, when Jehu seized the northern kingdom. Therefore the reigns during this period should total the same for both kingdoms; but the sum of the years in these reigns recorded for Israel is higher than that for Judah. If the totals are checked reign by reign from the beginning, it will be seen that this difference increases by one year for each king. This would be accounted for if in Israel the death year of each king bore two numbers, the last of one reign and the first of the next, while in Judah the first year of each reign was that following the death year of the preceding king; that is, if Israel used the non-accession-year and Judah the accession-year reckoning.

That this is true can be demonstrated by individual cases. While Jeroboam of Israel was reigning 22 years, there were three kings on the throne of Judah: Rehoboam, 17 years; Abijam, 3 years; and Asa, to his 2nd

year. The exact relationship between these reigns is more complex, but from these figures it can be seen that there was no overlap of one year for each reign; the 17 years of Rehoboam, the 3 of Abijam, and the 2 of Asa in Judah total the 22 years of Jeroboam in Israel. It has been shown that it is the accession-year system that gives a correct total for a series of reigns. If Judah had used the non-accession-year system, counting the last year of each king as the first of the next, the periods of 17, 3, and 2 years would cover only 20 years of actual elapsed time instead of 22. Actually the 2nd year of Asa was recorded as the beginning of the reign that followed Jeroboam's 22 years. Obviously Judah was using the accession-year reckoning, so that the 17th year of Rehoboam was followed by the 1st of Abijam, the 3rd of Abijam by the 1st of Asa, etc.

It is equally obvious that Israel was using the other system. During the long reign of Asa of Judah several kings of Israel came to the throne, in the 2nd, 3rd, 26th, 27th, etc., of that reign. The gaps between these regnal years appear to indicate lengths of 1, 23, 1, etc., for these shorter Israelite reigns. However, the record reads: Nadab, 2 years; Baasha, 24 years; Elah, 2 years; etc. Here, then, is an overlap: If the remainder of the year of accession is called year 1, each reign gets an extra year. Nadab's 2 years are necessarily synchronized with Asa's 2nd and 3rd years, Baasha's 24 years with Asa's 3rd to 26th inclusive. Later we find the same thing: Omri's 12 years between the 27th and 38th of Asa, and Ahaziah's 2 years in the 17th and 18th of Jehoshaphat.

On this arrangement, with Judah counting by one system and Israel the other, both lines harmonize.

Later Changes in Accession Reckoning - This system, deduced from the simple fact that it works, seems to be consistently used in the earlier parts of the books of Kings. Then there comes a time when the synchronisms disagree with the recorded lengths of the reigns unless it is supposed that the kings of Judah have begun reckoning their years by the Israelite non-accession-year system, while the data harmonize if a change to the Israelite method is assumed. This change could have occurred with the accession of Jehoram of Judah at the death of Jehoshaphat, or possibly at the usurpation of Athaliah; some think that she introduced the change and also reckoned the years of Jehoram by it in the official records. The old and new reckonings of that reign may furnish the explanation of the apparently conflicting records of the accession of Ahaziah of Judah in both the 11th and the 12th year of Joram of Israel (see 2 Kings 8:25; 2 Kings 9:29). The supposed contradiction disappears if it is assumed that both refer to the same year, the one numbered the 11th by the older accession-year system being the 12th year by the new non-accession-year method of counting. The reason for such a change is unknown, but it can logically be attributed to the influence of Israel. It is interesting to note that Jehoram, whose reign seems to introduce the change, was married to Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel of Israel.

Half a century later the synchronisms appear to require another change; this time they point to the adoption of the accession-year system by the northern kingdom at the accession of Jehoash in the 37th year of Joash of Judah, and then the return of Judah to the same system at Joash's death, with the accession of Amaziah. There is nothing to indicate this except the interlocking of the reigns when diagramed according to the synchronisms, but a plausible cause might be found in the then-increasing influence of Assyria, which employed the accession-year reckoning.

Each Scribe Uses His National Regnal Reckoning - The synchronisms seem to indicate that when the accession of a king of Judah is recorded in the book of Kings, presumably as it appeared in the official records of Judah, it is dated in terms of Judah's method of regnal-year numbering. That is, when it is

dated in a year of the contemporary king of Israel, the Israelite king's regnal year is numbered by the reckoning used in Judah, even if that is different from the numbering used in Israel. Sometimes, on this basis, the number is one year lower than that reckoned in Israel; for example, the accession of Nadab of Israel, in "the second year of Asa" of Judah, occurred in what Nadab would have called Asa's second year, but what Asa called his "year 1," for the year numbered 1 in the accession-year system is numbered 2 in the non-accession-year system. This difference, of course, disappears during the time when the two kingdoms seem to be using the same system.

It is to be expected that a scribe would use his own calendar-year numbering to record the years of a foreign king; therefore this adjustment is not surprising. But he might also be expected to begin the foreign king's years by his own New Year's Day, just as in later times Nehemiah reckoned the Persian king's 20th year as beginning in the autumn, as in Judah, although the Persian year began in the spring (Nehemiah 1:1; 2:1). The synchronisms in Kings, however, seem not to be reckoned on that principle, for the discrepancies that appear if that sort of adjustment is made are avoided if it is assumed that the scribe or chronicler of each kingdom revised the year numbers of the other kingdom to his own country's method of numbering, but that he did not revise the beginning of the year. That is, the principle derives its plausibility solely from the fact that it works.

NOTE: It has been suggested that a very slight shift of a half year in the alignment of the reigns of Israel and Judah at the beginning of the period would seem to eliminate, for the earlier portion at least, any need for this revising of Israel's non-accession-year numbering in terms of Judah's accession-year numbering, and vice versa, but would correctly synchronize the fall-to-fall regnal years as reckoned in Judah with the corresponding spring-to-spring regnal years as reckoned in Israel. This would be convincing if there were no evidence at the time when Judah changed methods, of a double reckoning (the 11th and 12th years of Joram's reign equated). Either the method of recording the regnal years varied or the hypothesis set forth in this section—that is, the consistent revision of the neighboring king's year number—must stand for the present, though it cannot be insisted on as a dogmatic statement of fact.

Coregencies Occur in Many Reigns - Many of the reigns fit into the synchronisms with the other kingdom without any overlap, but in some cases there is an apparent discrepancy unless the son came to the throne some time before the father's death and ruled jointly with him, and thus the two reigns overlapped for a period of years. If, in order to make the accession synchronisms harmonize with the lengths of the reigns, such a co regency can be assumed without doing violence to any other synchronism, there is no reason why the co regency cannot be regarded as based on good evidence. Of course it cannot be taken as completely proved so long as there is the possibility of someone's explaining the data equally well by a different scheme; even the occurrence of an interregnum somewhere along the line cannot be ruled out completely. Sometimes, as in the case of Uzziah, who became incapacitated for royal duties because of leprosy, there is actual narrative evidence for a co regency (2 Kings 15:5), and there is reason to conclude that a co regency is indicated for Jehoram of Judah (2 Kings 1:17; 3:1; 8:16), but most of the cases are based solely on the necessities of the Bible data. In some of these cases the total years given in Kings seem to refer to the whole reign, including the co regency; less often to only the sole reign. Each case is determined by the synchronisms.

In the chronology employed for this commentary, the following coregencies are assumed to have occurred: in the kingdom of Judah, Asa-Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat-Jehoram, Amaziah-Azariah, Azariah-Jotham, Jotham-Ahaz, Ahaz-Hezekiah, and Hezekiah-Manasseh; in that of Israel, Jehoash-Jeroboam II.

Problem Spots in This System - Since the purpose of this section is not to set forth a chronological scheme, but to explain the basis for the dating used in this book, it is necessary to discuss only a few typical reigns. There are, however, certain problem spots that need to be mentioned.

1. The earliest is not in the series of synchronisms in the books of Kings, but is an isolated statement in Chronicles, that apparently places the building of Ramah by Baasha in the 36th year of the reign of Asa (2 Chronicles 16:1; see also 1 Kings 15:17). But Baasha died and was succeeded by his son Elah in the 26th year of Asa (1 Kings 16:6, 8). Hence he could not have built Ramah 10 years later. If, however, we understand this 36th year as referring to Asa's dynasty, not his personal reign, the problem is solved; for the 36th year from the division of the kingdom falls within the reigns of both Asa and Baasha.

2. There is an apparent discrepancy between the statements that Joram of Israel began to reign in the 2nd year of Jehoram son of Jehoshaphat of Judah and also in the 18th year of Jehoshaphat (2 Kings 1:17; 3:1); but that Jehoram of Judah began to reign in the 5th year of Joram of Israel (2 Kings 8:16). The explanation is that Jehoram of Judah was in his 2nd year of co regency, in his father's 18th year, when Joram of Israel came to the throne, but that he succeeded his father as sole ruler only in the 5th year of Joram of Israel.

3. There seems to be no room in the charting of the chronology for a 20-year reign for Pekah if it began at the time when he overthrew Pekahiah and took the throne of Israel, but if he reckoned as his the reigns of his two predecessors—that is, the house of Menahem—the 20 years would fit in. Such a procedure is not without parallel. There is a case in Egyptian history where Harmhab counted as his own all the years of four kings: Ikhnaton, Smenkhare, Tutankhamen, and Eye. Even in English history we have the case of Charles II, who came to the throne in the Restoration of 1660, but who counted his reign from the execution of Charles I in 1649, ignoring the Cromwell period.

It is possible that Pekah regarded himself as the genuine successor of the powerful dynasty of Jehu, as a patriot of the anti-Assyrian party in reaction against the "collaborationist" tendencies of Menahem, who paid tribute to Tiglath-pileser. It is even possible that, in the upheaval that put an end to Jehu's dynasty with the murder of Zachariah, Pekah had actually acquired the rule over part of Israel's territory, and so considered himself king, although he did not gain control over all of Israel until he slew Pekahiah; in that case he would not have recognized the intervening rulers as legitimate kings at all. We do not know what happened, but in the light of the historical and political background, Pekah's appropriating in his records a dozen years of reign from his predecessors cannot be considered either unprecedented or improbable.

4. Jotham is given a reign of 16 years (2 Kings 15:32, 33; 2 Chronicles 27:1, 8). Yet Hoshea came to the throne in the 20th year of Jotham (2 Kings 15:30). There is no inconsistency between two totals for a reign if a co regency took place, for one can include the entire reign and the other the sole reign. But this case seems complicated by a co regency with Ahaz at the end of Jotham's reign; the combination of the synchronisms seems to indicate that his years 16–20 cover the period after Ahaz came to the throne, when Jotham was probably no longer carrying on the affairs of state. Thus in one sense his rule could have ended in his 16th year, yet during the rest of his life his regnal years could continue to be counted.

5. Some find a problem in synchronizing the reign of Hezekiah with the reign of Hoshea. But others believe that the problem is solved by assuming a co regency, precisely as has been done elsewhere when the synchronisms seem to require it. In every case the figures must be tested by the synchronisms, and on

that basis assigned to either the sole reign or the co regency or both. When this method is applied to the case of Hezekiah, it is found that the specifications are all met if it can be assumed (a) that Hezekiah's accession in the third year of Hoshea was the beginning of his co regency; and (b) that the figures for his age and the length of his reign belong to his sole reign after his father's death.

On these assumptions, Hezekiah's accession formula could be understood:

"Now it came to pass in the third year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel, that Hezekiah the son of Ahaz king of Judah began to reign [as coregent with his father]. Twenty and five years old was he when he began to reign [alone at his father's death]; and he reigned twenty and nine years [in his sole reign]" (2 Kings 18:1, 2).

A similar method of interpreting the figures in the accession formula of Ahaz has been adopted by some (see 2 Kings 16:1, 2). Actually, however, if Hezekiah's age at his father's death was 25, then Ahaz' recorded age of 20 years must have referred to the beginning of Ahaz' co regency rather than to the beginning of his sole reign. Then his age at Hezekiah's birth would have been 15, which is not at all unheard of in the ancient Near East.

6. The greatest difficulty comes in the chronology of Ahaz. Hoshea came to the throne as the result of a conspiracy against Pekah. The Bible says he "made a conspiracy" in the 20th year of Jotham (2 Kings 15:30). The Assyrian annals record that the people overthrew Pekah and that Tiglath-pileser made Hoshea king. This year seems to have been the 12th of Ahaz (2 Kings 17:1). However, the rest of the chronological scheme, as it has been worked out from the other data in the Bible, does not harmonize with this last synchronism with the reign of Ahaz. This is the incomplete link in the chain. It has been remarked that the arrangement of the kings on which the dating in this commentary is based comes nearest to a complete harmony of all the Biblical and non-Biblical data now known. It must not be claimed as complete as long as this synchronism cannot be accounted for and the other reigns related properly to it. Therefore rather than resort to revision or conjecture, it is better to state frankly that this problem has not been solved.

There is the possibility, of course, that the apparent discrepancy is due to a copyist's error. However, other chronological problems formerly thought to be due to such errors can now be solved because of a better understanding of ancient methods of reckoning. Hence it is not unreasonable to hope that this particular problem will, in time, be similarly solved. Perhaps some further information may be unearthed that will help; perhaps someone can build on what has already been done and arrive at a slightly different alignment of the reigns of this period that will preserve the harmony of the synchronism and also find a place for this last piece of evidence.

Some may ask: What is the value of any pattern of chronology if it is incomplete and confessedly subject to possible revision? The answer is, Our understanding of the Bible is incomplete, and our interpretation of certain texts is, at times, in need of revision. But that fact hardly warrants the conclusion some draw, that the study long given to Scripture provides no constructive approach to its understanding. On the contrary, we believe that the longer we study the Bible, the better we see its harmony, and the more fully we are persuaded that the writers of the Scripture presented a coherent, unified line of thought.

The same is true of that part of the Bible devoted to chronology. The longer it is studied, the more it takes shape and orderly form, and the more meaningful become the historical records that hang upon the chronological framework.

The Basis for the B.C. Dating of the Kings

The preceding section deals with a tentative chronological arrangement of the reigns of the two Hebrew kingdoms in relation to each other. Yet even after a complete chronological pattern has been constructed for these two lines, no B.C. dates can be assigned to any reign unless there is at least one direct synchronism to peg the series down in a fixed alignment with known events in ancient history. Therefore, a discussion of the historical basis for the generally accepted B.C. dating of the period must be considered.

The books of Kings refer to several rulers of Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon as being contemporary with certain Hebrew kings. There is an indirect but conclusive synchronism in Assyrian records—though not in the Bible—between the reigns of Ahab and Jehu and that of Shalmaneser III. But the clearest and most certain evidence is found in a series of synchronisms, some of them dated to the month and day, between specific years of several of the last kings of Judah and the years of Nebuchadnezzar. Although there are slight differences of opinion on some of these synchronisms, the capture of Jehoiachin is dated beyond question in Nebuchadnezzar's 7th (Babylonian) year, in Adar, 597 B.C. For Nebuchadnezzar's reign is fixed astronomically, not only by Ptolemy's Canon, which comes from a later time, but also by a contemporary Babylonian text giving a whole series of exact astronomical data. Therefore, the explanation of the evidence for the B.C. dating will begin with the firmly established years of Nebuchadnezzar and will work backward through Ptolemy's Canon and the Assyrian limmu lists.

The Astronomical Tablet of Nebuchadnezzar's 37th Year - Among the thousands of public and private documents, written on clay tablets, that have been unearthed by archeologist in Mesopotamia, two astronomical texts are of outstanding importance to chronology, for they fix the B.C. dating of the reigns of Nebuchadnezzar II and Cambyses, respectively. The one most valuable for the later period of the Hebrew kings is concerned with the 37th year of Nebuchadnezzar. It contains a series of observational data on the positions of various heavenly bodies throughout a complete year, running from Nisan 1, year 37, to Nisan 1, year 38 of the reign. Modern astronomers who have checked this information by astronomical computation say that the combination of data for the sun, moon, and planets, which all move in differing cycles, cannot be duplicated in any other year within centuries, if ever. Thus Nebuchadnezzar's 37th regnal year is fixed beyond doubt at 568/67 B.C.; and all other years in his reign are established also; the 1st year was 604/03 B.C., and the 7th year, in which he captured Jehoiachin, was 598/97 B.C. Since there are several Biblical synchronisms with Nebuchadnezzar's reign, the end of the kingdom of Judah is anchored to this B.C. dating, but the synchronisms between the Hebrew kings and Assyrian rulers must be located by means of Assyrian chronological lists which are linked with Nebuchadnezzar's reign through the king list known as Ptolemy's Canon.

Ptolemy's Canon Fixed by Eclipses - The Greek-Egyptian astronomer Claudius Ptolemaeus, or Ptolemy, who lived near Alexandria in the 2nd century of the Christian Era, wrote an astronomical work entitled *Mathematike Syntaxis* ("Mathematical Composition"). It is, however, better known by its Arabic title, the *Almagest*, because it was preserved for posterity by the Arab civilization that flourished during the Dark

Ages, when Europe was sunk in ignorance of classical science and literature. This work, which was the authoritative treatise on astronomy for 1,400 years, until superseded by the theory set forth by Copernicus contains data for numerous eclipses and other celestial phenomena, dated to the year, day, and hour in the ancient Egyptian calendar. There are 19 eclipses, ranging over nearly 900 years, many of which are dated in regnal years of various kings.

As a sort of appendix to the *Almagest* is Ptolemy's Canon, or list, of kings, enumerating consecutive Babylonian, Persian, Macedonian, and Roman rulers, with the lengths of the reigns and the totals, thus furnishing a scale of years by which to reckon intervals between the observations mentioned in the *Almagest*. Since its purpose was not to give a complete record of all the reigns, but to assign a regnal number to every year in the scale, it did not include any reign that lasted less than a year, and the reigns were counted by full years, ignoring the exact date of accession. The years by which it was reckoned were neither lunar nor true solar years, but the ancient Egyptian calendar year of 365 days, which wanders backward through the seasons one day every four Julian years. The starting point of the canon is the beginning of the first regnal year of the Babylonian king Nabonassar, a point that can be placed, by means of the exact intervals given in the *Almagest* between that point and the various eclipses, at noon February 26, 747 B.C. This was the 1st of Thoth, the Egyptian New Year's Day, at that time (although by Nebuchadnezzar's time Thoth 1 had shifted to January, and by the time Ptolemy himself lived, it had moved back through the autumn and into July).

From Ptolemy's Canon, then, it is possible to assign B.C. dates to any regnal year of any of the kings in the list, that is, the years as reckoned in the Egyptian calendar. In the early (Babylonian) period of the Canon of Ptolemy each Egyptian year began about one to four months earlier than the corresponding lunar year beginning with Nisan. This is shown by the way in which the Egyptian years, as fixed by the eclipse data of Ptolemy's *Almagest*, are aligned with the Babylonian years as fixed in the tablet of the 37th year of Nebuchadnezzar and the similar tablet from the 7th year of Cambyses (which even records one of the same eclipses mentioned in the *Almagest*).

Ptolemy wrote many centuries after the early eclipses he records, and depended on copies of the astronomical documents from which his information was originally derived. Yet the canon is corroborated wherever it can be checked by ancient Babylonian, Persian, and Egyptian documents, showing that Ptolemy's regnal numbering corresponded with the contemporary reckoning.

The canon dating harmonizes with the astronomically fixed 37th year of Nebuchadnezzar, although the *Almagest* does not mention that year. It agrees also with another eclipse in the preceding reign, and with three others in the reign of Mardokempad (Marduk-apal-iddin, or the Biblical Merodach-baladan), the earliest eclipse being only 26 years from the starting point of the canon. And since the number of years from this point back to the first year of Nabonassar agrees with the Babylonian Chronicle and the Babylonian King List A (both found on clay tablets), it can be considered settled that Ptolemy's Canon gives us exact dates as far back as 747 B.C. Furthermore, both the Assyrian king lists and the Assyrian limmu list, sometimes called the Eponym Canon, are in harmony with Ptolemy's reckoning of the lengths of the reigns wherever these lists for the close of the Assyrian Empire overlap the earlier section of the canon dating based on the eclipses.

PTOLEMY'S CANON OF THE KINGS

Years of the Kings Before the Death of Alexander and the Years of Alexander			Additional Data: Year 1 of Each Reign by Egyptian Calendar	
<i>Of the Assyrians and Medes</i>	<i>Years</i>	<i>Totals</i>	<i>n.e</i>	<i>Year Begins</i>
Nabonassar	14	14	1	Feb 26, 747 B.C.
Nadius	2	16	15	“ 23, 733
Chinzer and Porus	5	21	17	“ 22, 731
Iloulaius	5	26	22	“ 21, 726
Mardokempad	12	38	27	“ 20, 721
Arkean	5	43	39	“ 17, 709
First Interregnum	2	45	44	“ 15, 704
Bilib	3	48	46	“ 15, 702
Aparanad	6	54	49	“ 14, 699
Regebel	1	55	55	“ 13, 693
Mesesimordak	4	59	56	“ 12, 692
Second Interregnum	8	67	60	“ 11, 688
Asaridin	13	80	68	“ 9, 680
Saosdouchin	20	100	81	“ 6, 667
Kinelanadan	22	122	101	“ 1, 647
Nabopolassar	21	143	123	Jan 27, 625
Nabokolassar [Nebuchadnezzar] ...	43	186	144	“ 21, 604
Illoaroudam [Evil–Merodach]	2	188	187	“ 11, 561
Nerigasolassar [Neriglissar]	4	192	189	“ 10, 559
Nabonadius [Nabonidus]	17	209	193	“ 9, 555
<i>Of the Persian Kings</i>				
Cyrus	9	218	210	“ 5, 538

Cambyeses	8	226	219	“ 3, 529
Darius I	36	262	227	“ 1, 521
Xerxes	21	283	263	Dec 23 486
Artaxerxes I	41	324	284	“ 17, 465
Darius II	19	343	325	“ 7, 424
Artaxerxes II	46	389	344	“ 2, 405
Ochus	21	410	390	Nov 21, 359
Arogus	2	412	411	“ 16, 338
Darius III	4	416	413	“ 15, 336
Alexander of Macedonia	8	424	417	“ 14, 332
Years of the Macedonian Kings After the Death of Alexander the King				
Of the Macedonian Kings	Years	Totals		
Philip	7	7	425	“ 12, 324
Alexander II	12	19	432	“ 10, 317
Ptolemy Lagus	20	39	444	“ 7, 305
Philadelphus	38	77	464	“ 2, 285
Euergetes I	25	102	502	Oct 24, 247
Philopator	17	119	527	“ 18, 222
Epiphanes	24	143	544	“ 13, 205
Philometor	35	178	568	“ 7, 181
Euergetes II	29	207	603	Sept 29, 146
Soter	36	243	632	“ 21, 117
Dionysius the Younger	29	272	668	“ 12, 81
Cleopatra	22	294	697	“ 5, 52
Of the Roman Kings				

Augustus	43	337	719	Aug 31, 30 B.C.
Tiberius	22	359	762	“ 20, 14 A.D.
Gaius	4	363	784	“ 14, 36
Claudius	14	377	788	“ 13, 40
Nero	14	391	802	“ 10, 54
Vespasian	10	401	816	“ 6, 68
Titus	3	404	826	“ 4, 78
Domitian	15	419	829	“ 3, 81
Nerva	1	420	844	July 30, 96
Trajan	19	439	845	“ 30, 97
Hadrian	21	460	864	“ 25, 116
Aelius–Antonine [Antoninus Pius]	23	483	885	“ 20, 137

Note: The first three columns of the tabulation are a translation from the Greek text of Ptolemy's Canon. The heading at the top of column 1, "Of the Assyrians and Medes," refers to kings of Babylon (some of the earlier ones were Assyrian rulers). After the Babylonian kings come "the Persian Kings," whose line ends with Alexander the Great. Then Ptolemy continues with a listing of the Macedonian rulers of the Egyptian division of the defunct empire of Alexander. The list carries on through the Roman emperors, presumably down to the date when Ptolemy lived. The second column gives the length of each reign. The third gives the accumulated total years of the era. Hence the number opposite any king's name represents, in terms of the Nabonassar Era, his last year of reign. Thus for example, the figure 226 opposite Cambyses represents his 8th, that is his last, year. His year 1 is the year 219 of the canon, the year following the total figure for the preceding king, Cyrus. Accordingly, chronologists have referred to Cambyses' first year as n.e. (Nabonassar Era) 219, and have used this n.e. numbering throughout, but Ptolemy's Canon gives only the cumulative total at the end of each reign, carrying that cumulative total down only to the end of Alexander the Great's reign, and then beginning a new series of totals.

The last two columns, not in Ptolemy's Canon, are added for convenience: the n.e. for the year 1 of each reign, and the B.C. date of Thoth 1, the beginning of each of these Egyptian years of the canon. Ptolemy used the old 365-day Egyptian calendar years, not the years used by the Babylonian, Persian, Macedonian, and Roman rulers, and not the Julian-Egyptian civil calendar as stabilized by Augustus to begin on August 29 (30th every 4 years).

The Assyrian Limmu List, or Eponym Canon - This overlap of the latter part of the Assyrian chronology with Ptolemy's Canon makes possible the assignment of B.C. dates to the series of names by which the Assyrians designated successive years, the limmu list, or the Eponym Canon. The ancient Assyrian practice was to designate each year, not by a number, but by the name of an annual honorary official, called a limmu (Greek, "eponym"). This office was conferred in turn upon the king and certain of his high officers, generally in a prescribed order. Lists of these named years were kept for official or business use in every city. In the year in which Tiglath-pileser III came to the throne, for example, the

limmu for that year was Nabû-bêl-uşur; hence, all documents were dated “in the year of Nabû-bêl-uşur.” The eponym for the next year (the first year of the reign) was Bêl-dân, but in the following year (the second of the reign), the king himself held the title, and so the year was designated as “the year of Tukulti-apil-Esharra” (Tiglath-pileser). The king customarily, though not always, held the office of eponym in the second year of his reign.

The limmu list is not complete for all of Assyrian history. The extant portion, compiled from various tablets, is consecutive only for the period from about 900 to 650 B.C.; the last period (647–612) is not certain. Fortunately, it overlaps Ptolemy’s Canon, and is thus anchored to the B.C. dating around 700, when some of the kings of Assyria were also kings of Babylon. Since the limmu list is thus aligned with the B.C. dating near its end, every year in the series can be dated if the list as we have it is complete. In the past, there have been differences of opinion concerning possible gaps in the list, but present scholarship accepts it as complete; therefore events recorded as occurring in certain eponymies are confidently dated on this basis—for example, the battle of Qarqar, in which Ahab participated, is placed in 853 B.C.

The King Lists Aligned With the Limmu List - Since the Assyrian limmu list is a series of names, without numerals, its scale of years can be used only for a purely relative scheme of chronology; it must be aligned with other known dating before it can be employed to assign B.C. dates to recorded events. But some copies of portions of the list carry a notation of a key event for each year, and some have horizontal lines between reigns. Such information makes it possible to align the limmu list with the extant Assyrian king lists as well as with the early part of Ptolemy’s Canon. Several of these scales coincide, thus corroborating Ptolemy’s Canon for the period preceding the first eclipse record, and locking the eponym list and king lists in alignment with the canon, hence with established B.C. dating.

NOTABLE SYNCHRONISMS BETWEEN PTOLEMY’S CANON AND ASSYRO-BABYLONIAN RECORDS

1st Year of Reign*	Ptolemy’s Canon	Years of Reign	Total of Years †	From Babylonian King List A‡	Years of Reign	Extracts From Assyrian Eponym List With Notes (Limmu) (Event Noted)		Assyrian King List	
								King	Years of Reign
B.C.									
747/46	Nabonassar	14	14	Nabu-nasir	[14]				
745/44						Nabû-bêl-uşur BeÆl-daÆn	Tiglath-pileser took his seat on [the throne	Tukulti-apil-Esharra III (Tiglath-	18
744/43									

								pilesar III)	
733/32	Nadius	2	16	Nabu-nadin-zeri	2				
731/30 730/29 729/28 728/27 727/26	Chinzer and Porus	5	21	Ukinzer 3 & Pulu (Pul or Tiglath-pilesar)† 2	5	Naphar-ilu Dûri- Ashshur Bêl-harran- bêl-uşur	The king took the hand of Bêl Shalmaneser and took his seat on the throne		
726/25	Iloulaius	5	26	Ululaia	5	Marduk- bêl-uşur		Shulmânu- asharêd V (Shalmanes er V)	5
721/20	Mardokem pad	12	38	iddin (Mero- dach-baladan)	12	Nabû-târiş		Sharru-ukîn II	17
709/08	Arkean	5	43	Sharru-ukéÆn (Sargon II)	5	Mannu-kî- Ashshur- le'i	Sargon took the hand of Bêl	[Tablet: Sargon's yr. 13]§	
705/04						Nashur- beÆl	Sennacherib took his seat on		
704/03	1st Interregnu m	2	45	Sin-ahhê-rîba (Sennacherib)	2	Nabu-dini- epush	[the throne	Sin-ahhê- rîba	24

* These years are anchored firmly to Ptolemy's Canon and hence to the other lists aligned with it. Bold figures mean the 1st year of each reign, regardless of the accession reckoning. The years for the canon begin with Thoth 1, somewhat earlier than the Assyro-Babylonian year beginning with Nisan.

† The total represents the year of the canon corresponding to the last year of each reign.

‡ The figures given in this king list are all corroborated by the Babylonian Chronicle. For Pulu in the king list, the Chronicle gives Tiglath-pilesar.

§ Several tablets give dates synchronizing the limmu name and the regnal year in Assyrian and Babylonian reckoning: Sargon's 13th yr. in Assyria is his 1st in Babylon; his 14th, 15th, and 16th are his Babylonian 2d, 3rd, and 4th.

The Babylonian Chronicle and king list agree with Ptolemy's Canon in the lengths of the reigns and in the names, except that Ptolemy's Greek spelling is quite different from the Babylonian. After the 14 years of Nabonassar and the 2 of Nabu-nadin-zeri (Ptolemy's Nadius), the Babylonian king list gives Ukinzer 3 years and Pulu (Biblical Pul) 2 years (Ptolemy: Chinzer and Porus, 5 years), whereas the Babylonian Chronicle records that Ukinzer in his 3rd year was defeated by Tiglath-pileser of Assyria, who took over Babylon and himself assumed the title of king of Babylon for two years.

Thus, some years after Tiglath-pileser III (Tukulti-apil-Esharra) began his reign, according to the Assyrian king list, the notation for the year of the limmu named Naphar-ilu reads: "The king took the hand of Bel." That is, the Assyrian king went through the New Year coronation ceremony at Babylon, the rite of receiving the kingship from the god Bel, just as all Babylonian kings did annually; thus in the sight of his Babylonian subjects he became, not a foreign overlord, but a duly consecrated king of Babylon. Since the Babylonian king list calls Ukinzer's successor in Babylon "Pulu," and the Babylonian Chronicle says that it was "Tukulti-apil-Esharra," and that he died in his second year, it is generally accepted that Tiglath-pileser ruled Babylon in his last two years under the name of Pul, differing from his Assyrian throne name.

Two years after Naphar-ilu the limmu list notes the accession of Shalmaneser (V), and then the Assyrian king list attests the 1st of Shulmânu-asharêd V after the 18 years of Tiglath-pileser III. If the accession year of Shalmaneser V, the death year of Tiglath-pileser, is the same as the death year of Pulu, or the 5th of the 5 years assigned to Ukinzer and Pulu (or Chinzer and Porus), then Shalmaneser came to the throne in the year 21 of the canon, or 727/26 B.C., and the 5 years of Shalmaneser correspond to the 5 years of Ululaia, or Iloulaius, king of Babylon. Thus, Shalmaneser seems also to have had a different name as king of Babylon. At the end of Shalmaneser's reign the Chaldean leader Marduk-apal-iddin (Ptolemy's Mardokempad) took Babylon and held it for 12 years. This was the Biblical Merodach-baladan. His rule in Babylon parallels the reign of Shalmaneser's successor, Sharru-ukîn, or Sargon II (called Arkean by Ptolemy from the Assyrian *arqu* meaning "second"). After 12 years Merodach-baladan was driven out by Sargon, who "took the hand of Bel" and in 709 B.C. began his five-year rule as king of Babylon. This was the year of Mannu-kî-Ashshur-le'i, in the canon year corresponding to 709 B.C. Also, several cuneiform tablets independently corroborate Sargon's 13th through 16th years of rule over Assyria as his years 1 through 4 in Babylon. The limmu list notes the accession of Sennacherib (Sin-ahhê-rîba), and then his first year is listed in both the Babylonian and the Assyrian king lists. Ptolemy, however, has a 2-year interregnum here; evidently because the memory of Sennacherib's destroying the city of Babylon resulted in the dropping out of his name in some king lists. Consequently, Ptolemy's source must have named no king for those 2 years, until Bêl-ibni (Bilib) was placed over Babylon, and none for Sennacherib's last 8 years, where Ptolemy again has an interregnum.

This series of exact parallels between the Canon of Ptolemy and the limmu lists demonstrates that this is a genuine overlap of the two lists, and therefore that these years of the limmu list may be assigned the same B.C. dates as the corresponding canon years. The Assyrian list, thus fixed, can be used from this point back as a chronological scale, as far as it is complete.

The Eclipse of 763 B.C - How far back is the limmu list complete? In the past, this was disputed. Those who used interregna to reconcile the Judah and Israel lines had to assume gaps in the limmu list, but those

who used coregencies found harmony between the reigns of the Hebrew kings and their Assyrian contemporaries without assuming gaps in the list. There can be no proof of completeness, since there are no totals or known intervals against which to check the names except where they are corroborated by independent sources. The present list does not depend on merely one original. The fact that several of the various extant partial lists overlap during this period, makes it relatively unlikely that the list is incomplete here. Those who hold that there are gaps must assume that all these copies came from an older erroneous archetype that was incomplete.

A check point is the year of Bur-sagale (a name variously spelled), in which an eclipse of the sun is mentioned as taking place in the month of Simanu (Sivan). Originally, there was difference of opinion as to the date of this event, for there were solar eclipses in that part of the world that could have been dated in Sivan in the years 809, 791, and 763 B.C. But the one in 763 is generally accepted today for several reasons: It was, unlike the other two, a total eclipse; it was visible nearest to Nineveh, and therefore would be the most spectacular eclipse of the period; but further, the extant eponym list, anchored firmly to the B.C. dating of the Canon of Ptolemy, places the year of Bur-sagale precisely in 763 B.C., the nearest and most likely year in which there was an actual eclipse at a time that can be dated in the month Sivan. Since this point is only 30 years away from the period of certain dating, it seems reasonable to assume that the list is correct at least this far back, and that the dating of the synchronisms between the Hebrew kings and Tiglath-pileser cannot be moved very far from the present dating of the Assyrian reigns. Back of 763, however, there is no such check point, and the possibility of gaps in the earlier portion is greater, yet there is no definite reason to doubt the completeness of the list as far back as Shalmaneser III, where we find the earliest synchronism between Assyrian and Hebrew reigns.

Synchronisms Between Hebrew, Assyrian, and Babylonian Kings - If then the Assyrian limmu list can be used to date the reigns of the Assyrian kings contemporary with the divided Hebrew kingdoms, it can also be used to date the Hebrew reigns wherever they are synchronized with Assyrian kings, just as the last reigns of Judah can be dated by Nebuchadnezzar's reign. The synchronisms between Hebrew kings and those of Assyria and Babylonia must therefore be discussed under the following section.

The B.C. Dating of the Hebrew Kings

Contacts Between Hebrew Kings and Egyptian Pharaohs - The earliest mention of a foreign king in connection with a ruler of Israel or Judah is that of Shishak (Egyptian, Sheshonk), who invaded Judah in the 5th year of Rehoboam of Judah (1 Kings 14:25, 26; 2 Chronicles 12:2-9). But this information does not help to locate the 5th year of Rehoboam, because the chronology of the Twenty-second Dynasty is not exactly known. Sheshonk is believed to have begun his reign about 950 B.C. The next contact mentioned is that of "So king of Egypt" with Hoshea of Israel (2 Kings 17:4), but again there is no information to establish any exact date. A third contact is that of "Tirhakah king of Ethiopia" and Hezekiah.

Synchronisms Between Hebrew and Assyrian Kings - The earliest synchronisms between Israelite and Assyrian kings do not come from the Bible, but from the annals of Shalmaneser III, in the 6th and 18th years of his reign. The first of these was the year assigned in the limmu list to Daiân-Ashshur. Not only does the annotated form of the limmu list give the name of Daiân-Ashshur in the 6th year after the one in which Shalmaneser is noted as taking his seat on the throne, but also some forms of the annals date this

campaign in the 6th year of the reign. Shalmaneser's "Monolith Inscription" records that in the year of Daiân-Ashshur the Assyrian forces went on a western campaign and at Qarqar in Syria met a defensive coalition that included Benhadad of Damascus and Ahabbu mat Sir'ila, or "Ahab of the land of Israel." Twelve years later, on another expedition to the west, in his 18th year, he fought Hazael of Damascus, and received tribute from Iaua mâr Humri ("Jehu, son of Omri," that is, of the land of Omri, or Israel). Shalmaneser's Black Obelisk shows a relief of Jehu bowing before him, presenting tribute. These two years are now placed in 853 and 841 B.C., respectively. (The dates 854 and 842, based by older authorities on a single limmu list, are contradicted by all other lists.)

These two years were the last of Ahab and the first of Jehu, since there are two intervening reigns (Ahaziah, 2 years, and Joram, 12 years) totaling 12 regnal years by the non-accession-year reckoning with its overlap of one year for each reign:

Twelve Years From Ahab to Jehu

	B.C. 853														Years of Shalmaneser III														B.C. 841	
Assyrian Years	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19															
Israelite Years	21	22	1	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2												
	Ahab		Ahaziah	Jehoram												Jehu														

Ahaziah and Jehoram (Joram) intervene with 14 regnal years - Since the B.C. dating of Shalmaneser III seems to be established by the limmu list, the reigns of Ahab, Ahaziah, Joram, and Jehu of Israel are similarly established, also that of the contemporary Ahaziah of Judah, whose brief reign of one year ended in the 12th year of Joram of Israel, that is, the 18th of Shalmaneser. Insofar as our data are correct, the whole pattern of the two lines of Hebrew kings can be dated in the B.C. scale. It is from this Shalmaneser synchronism that the B.C. date for Solomon's 4th year, the 480th from the Exodus, is placed at 967/66 B.C., and his 40th year, in which the division came, in 931/30.

Jehoash of Israel is probably the Ia'asu mentioned by Adad-nirari III of Assyria. The use of the singular pronoun "he" is held by some to indicate that Pul and Tiglath-pileser in 1 Chronicles 5:26 are one person, and that the translation can read Pul, even Tiglath-pileser. Pekah and Ahaz are contemporaries of Tiglath-pileser (2 Kings 16:5, 10; 2 Chronicles 28:19-21). The latter's annals mention Menihimme, Paqaha, and Ausi' (translated Menahem, Pekah, and Hoshea), and it is probable, though disputed, that his "Azriau from Iauda" is Azariah of Judah.

Shalmaneser V besieged Samaria which fell "at the end of three years" (inclusive) in the 9th year of Hoshea and the 6th of Hezekiah (2 Kings 17:3, 4; 2 Kings 18:9, 10). Since Sargon II in his later years claimed to have taken Samaria early in his reign, some have thought that the city fell after the death of Shalmaneser, or else that Sargon was the general who actually captured the city just before his accession. But an Assyrian king's vainglorious claim made only in the late editions of his annals incurs suspicion. The one event recorded of Shalmaneser V in the Babylonian Chronicle is the conquest of a city; if its name is to be read as Shamara'in (not Shabara'in), this would indicate that Samaria fell just before the end of Shalmaneser's reign, in 723/22 B.C.

The last Biblical reference to contact between Assyria and Judah is that between Hezekiah and Sennacherib (although later Esarhaddon's annals mention Manasseh as Menasi, and Ashurbanipal

likewise refers to him as “Minsie” of “Iaudi”). Sennacherib invaded the west in the 14th year of Hezekiah (2 Kings 18:13) but did not take Jerusalem. This is evidently Sennacherib’s “third campaign” mentioned in the Assyrian annals. The two statements that Shalmaneser (V) came against Samaria in the 4th year of Hezekiah and that Sennacherib invaded Judah in the 14th year of the same king (2 Kings 18:9, 13) do not, as might appear at first glance, conflict with the Assyrian records of the intervening 17-year reign of Sargon II. This interval is a strong indication of a co regency for Hezekiah; it would put Shalmaneser’s invasion in the 4th year of the co regency and Sennacherib’s in the 14th year of the sole reign.

Although some commentators take account of only one attack on Judah by Sennacherib, the Bible narrative lends itself also to the interpretation that allows for a second invasion late in Hezekiah’s reign. Commentators who believe in a second campaign differ as to where the Biblical narrative makes the transition. However, the mention of “Tirhakah [Egyptian, Taharka] king of Ethiopia” (2 Kings 19:9) as threatening Sennacherib at this time seems to refer to a time near the end of Hezekiah’s reign, for Taharka, a king of the Twenty-fifth Dynasty of Egypt, which was Nubian, or “Ethiopian,” began to reign approximately 690 B.C. at the age of 20, according to present evidence that was published in 1949. This would have been within a very few years of the end of Hezekiah’s 29 years of sole reign. Thus the known date of Shalmaneser V and the approximate dating of Taharka of Egypt combine to favor the view of 29 years plus a co regency for Hezekiah.

Synchronisms Between Kings of Judah and of Babylon - The final reigns of Judah synchronize with the reign of Nebuchadnezzar (whose 37th year is astronomically fixed), and thus can be given B.C. dates. These may be tabulated:

Babylonian Years of Nebuchadnezzar, B. C.		Yrs. of Kings of Judah (fall-to-fall), B.C.	Notation	Text
1 st	604/03	4th Jehoiakim 605/04	23rd from 13th [of Josiah	Jeremiah 25:1, 3
8 th	597/96	Deportation of Jehoiachin 597	Reign, 598/97	2 Kings 24:8, 12
18 th	587/86	10th Zedekiah 588/87		Jeremiah 32:1
19 th	586/85	11th Zedekiah 587/86	City falls, 586	2 Kings 25:2-8; Jeremiah 52:5, 12

These dates agree with the most recent finds when Jehoiakim’s 4th year is aligned with Nebuchadnezzar’s 1st, Jehoiachin’s deportation “when the year was expired” (2 Chronicles 36:10) with Nebuchadnezzar’s 8th year, and Jerusalem’s fall with the latter’s 19th, if the Jewish fall-to-fall year is taken into account.

Note: These synchronisms, though interpreted variously, can be harmonized with the data on this basis: that any Jewish civil-calendar year began half a year before the corresponding Babylonian year in Nebuchadnezzar’s reign. Nebuchadnezzar reckoned his year 1 from the next Babylonian New Year’s Day following his accession, that is, with Nisan 1 in the spring of 604 B.C. Thus his accession year, counted from his father’s death in August, 605, was about eight months long in the Babylonian calendar. But if the Jews reckoned Nebuchadnezzar’s reign by their own fall-to-fall civil calendar, they counted as his accession

year only the interval from August, 605, to their own autumn New Year, Tishri 1, 605; they would reckon his first year (equated in Jeremiah 25:1 with the 4th of Jehoiakim) from autumn, 605, to autumn, 604.

The word translated “first” in the foregoing Jeremiah text is ri’shonith, generally taken as a synonym of ri’shon, which is translated “first” in many other texts (Numbers 9:1-5; Deuteronomy 16:4; Ezra 6:19; etc.). But some hold that by hashshanah hari’shonith Jeremiah meant “the accession year” rather than “the first year” of Nebuchadnezzar. Indeed, “accession year” is required here if Jehoiakim’s 4th year is to be reckoned, like the Babylonian year, from the spring; for in that case it would end at the beginning of Nebuchadnezzar’s year 1 in the spring of 604. But if “the fourth year of Jehoiakim” meant a Jewish year beginning in the autumn, it would overlap the first half of Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylonian year 1 and it would coincide exactly with the latter’s year 1 as reckoned from autumn, in the Jewish civil calendar.

By this Jewish reckoning the 3rd year of Jehoiakim, in which David was taken captive (Daniel 1:1), covers the spring and summer of 605; this agrees precisely with the record in the Babylonian Chronicle of the crown prince Nebuchadnezzar’s campaign in Syria-Palestine, during which his father’s death summoned him home to take the throne. Josephus’ account of this incident says that he left his captives, including Jews, to be brought on to Babylon by a slower route. Thus Jeremiah’s prophetic message concerning the beginning of the captivity (Jeremiah 25:1-11), received in the 4th year of Jehoiakim, could have been received in either the accession year or the 1st year of Nebuchadnezzar in the Babylonian calendar, for the Jewish civil-calendar year 4 would have been 605/04 B.C., fall to fall.

Similarly, in connection with Jehoiachin’s captivity, the Bible references to Nebuchadnezzar’s 8th year and the turn of the year (evidently about Nisan 1) are corroborated by the new archeological findings. The Babylonian record dates Jehoiachin’s capture on Adar of the 7th year, but in that month (the last of the Babylonian 7th year) the 8th year according to the Jewish civil calendar was already half gone, since it had begun six months earlier than the Babylonian year. There is complete harmony between the two records. These synchronisms also align the fall of Jerusalem, in Zedekiah’s 11th year, with the 19th of Nebuchadnezzar.

Ezekiel, who was taken captive to Babylon with Jehoiachin, frequently dates events by years of this captivity, for example:

Ezekiel’s vision of the siege, 9th yr. of captivity—Ezekiel 24:1, 2 (see the same date for the beginning of the siege—2 Kings 25:1; Jeremiah 52:4).

News of the city’s fall reaches Ezekiel in 10th month, 12th year—Ezekiel 33:21

(see fall of the city in 4th month of 11th year of Zedekiah and 19th year of Nebuchadnezzar—Jeremiah 39:2; 52:6-14).

Ezekiel’s vision in the 25th year of the captivity, the 14th after the city was smitten—Ezekiel 40:1.

These dates do not determine whether Ezekiel computed the years of Jehoiachin’s captivity from the spring or fall, or by anniversary reckoning from date of capture. These alternatives, along with differing opinions on the alignment of the 4th year of Jehoiakim and the 1st of Nebuchadnezzar, result in different dates for Ezekiel’s vision of the siege, and the news of the city’s fall.

Ezekiel’s reckoning, however, does not necessarily apply to another date formula given in terms of the captivity of Jehoiachin, the release of the captive king in the 12th month of the 37th year. Amel-Marduk, Nebuchadnezzar’s successor, took him from prison in Babylon “in the year that he began to reign” (2 Kings 25:27) or “in the first year of his reign” (Jeremiah 52:31; first being a supplied word). These two texts, respectively, read literally: “in the year when he was (or became) king” (2 Kings 25:27), and “in the year of his kingship” (Jeremiah 52:31). Some have considered “the year” of Amel-Marduk to be, on the analogy of the Arabic, his year 1, since it was the year—indeed, the only full calendar year—of his reign, for he died in his year 2. Others say that it means his accession year because “in the year that he reigned”

may be taken to imply that in which he began to reign. If in Kings and Jeremiah the years of Jehoiachin's captivity are counted inclusively from the fall-to-fall year in which he was taken, the 12th month of the 37th year falls in the Babylonian accession year of Amel-Marduk, in the spring of 561 B.C., which would be in year 1 as counted by Judah's fall-to-fall year. It is not necessary to assume that Ezekiel's reckoning in Babylon was the same as that used in Judah in the closing days of the monarchy. It could be an example of differing reckonings. This point, however, has no effect on the date of the end of the kingdom of Judah.

Assigning B.C. Dates to the Hebrew Lines - Assuming, then, that we have a scheme of the reigns of the Hebrew kings that is at least relatively consistent and tentatively correct, we can superimpose on that pattern the scale of B.C. dating to make the years of Nebuchadnezzar, whose B.C. equivalents are known, synchronize with the last reigns of Judah, and can work back from there. If the earlier synchronisms between Hebrew kings and the Assyrian rulers can be fitted in, without doing violence to the Biblical figures, during the time when the limmu list and the Canon of Ptolemy overlap; and if the still earlier period of Shalmaneser III with Ahab and Jehu can be harmonized also, it will appear that the reconstruction of the chronology of this period is reasonably correct.

This does not necessarily mean that every detail can be considered absolutely fixed, for where so many overlapped reigns must be allowed for, there may be more than one feasible way to adjust the relationships of these reigns. But the general scheme may be regarded as based on sound principles and usable as a working hypothesis for dating Biblical events. Absolutely exact dates can be given for only those events that are directly and unambiguously connected with some fixed point of reference, like the synchronisms of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar. Even in such cases, dates given in terms of lunar months cannot be dogmatically dated to the very day without allowing room for the variation of a day, sometimes of a month.

Although the exact chronology of all the Hebrew reigns is not regarded as fixed, the pattern is sufficiently complete to allow the listing of B.C. dates as at least tentative approximations for the reader's convenience. These dates are not given as a final statement of the exact chronology. Though the last few reigns of Judah are aligned with the Babylonian years of Nebuchadnezzar, the B.C. dates of earlier kings are to be taken as approximate, although possibly, and in most cases very probably, correct.

Other dates are relatively less certain, as they are distant in time from such fixed dates, or as they are involved in some of the adjustments, such as assumed coregencies, made solely on the basis of making the synchronisms fit on paper—as must be done provisionally if a complete scale is to be constructed at all.

The possible uncertainty of a few days, or even a few years, does not outweigh the value of a series of dates presented as a working hypothesis for the reader's convenience, but it is well to preserve an open mind for the possible revision of some of these minutiae when additional information becomes available.

CHAPTER EIGHT

ISRAEL'S MONARCHY

King David's Coronation in 3156 A.M.

In the year 3156 David was crowned king over Israel; he was a man of whom God declared, he is “a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfill all my will.” (Acts 13:22). But from ancient times Moses prophesied about the Son of God, when he wrote: “The scepter shall not depart from Judah...” (Genesis 49:10). The scepter of the King of kings would come from Judah, which was the tribe of David.

By God's providence, the plan of salvation was protected by the appointment of Saul as king of Israel. Nonetheless, nothing had been prophesied in connection with Benjamin, the tribe of Saul, in regards to the Redeemer of this world. Yet, Satan had Saul's offspring completely annihilated thinking that by doing so he was destroying all hope for the human race. But the Seed of the woman (Genesis 3:15) was in the lineage of David. And David himself prophesied about the Son of God, “For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell [the grave]; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption” (Psalms 16:10). Of whom did David prophesy? Let the word of God respond:

“Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulcher is with us unto this day” (Acts 2:29).

What kind of an answer is that? Understand that David prophesied about the Son of God, Who would be born of his loins and he calls Him Lord. “For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand” (Acts 2:34).

“Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell [the grave], neither his flesh did see corruption” (Acts 2:30-31).

David's Acknowledgment of God's Throne

God in His tender mercy would reserve the tribe of Judah for the preservation of the kingdom of David. God had assured David that from his loins the Majesty of Heaven would be born, whose kingdom is from everlasting to everlasting: “Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations” (Psalms 145:13). God told David: “thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever” (2 Sam. 7:16). And to Solomon the promise was ratified: “Then I will establish the throne of thy kingdom upon Israel for ever, as I promised to David thy father, saying, There shall not fail thee a man upon the throne of Israel” (1 Kings 9:5). David prophesied about the King of kings, our Lord Jesus, Who would be born to the lineage of David's royalty:

“Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre” (Psalms 45:6).

Although the battle to conquer and overthrow God’s plan of salvation for mankind had been tough, it did not prevail against God’s design. The marvelous plan of redemption was again in jeopardy; the kingdom of David ran the risk of succumbing completely to the forces of darkness (1 Kings 11:4-8). Nevertheless, God intervened and His Word was fulfilled, so that Israel’s apostasy was dealt with and David’s royal family punished but not left in despondency, as the Lord had declared: “And I will for this afflict the seed of David, but not for ever” (1 Kings 11:39).

Notice that David was the only Hebrew king who was crowned at the age of 30, and David prefigured our Lord, Who on the day when our Father in Heaven acknowledged Him with the words: “Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased” (Luke 3:22), “Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age...” (Luke 3:23). Also when our Lord was about to be offered He entered Jerusalem as King, “And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strowed them in the way” (Matt. 21:8). But the most amazing thing is that they acknowledged Jesus’ kingship:

“And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest” (Matt. 21:9).

The disciples prepared for the Lord a colt of an ass that had never been ridden by anybody else, “whereon never man sat” (Mark 11:2). This was in fulfillment of the prophecy of Zechari

“Tell ye the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass” (Matt. 21:5).

The prophet Jeremiah also ratified David’s prophecy by stating that from David’s lineage the King shall come. He proclaimed Him as follows:

“Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth” (Jeremiah 23:5).

Biblical chronology agrees with these Bible prophecies, and it is in essence a proof that the Lord Jesus, Who is the Son of God, is the King of kings. The word of God clarifies the prophecy of David as follows:

“But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows” (Hebrews 1:8-9).

Chart of the Kings of Israel

KINGS OF ISRAEL	REIGN	CORONATION	TEXT	WORLD YEAR (A.M.)
Samuel and Saul	End Period of	Both died in 3156	1 Sam. 25:1; 1 Sam. 28:3,7;	3156

	Judges		1 Sam. 31:4	
DAVID	40 years	Crowned at 30 years of age in year 3156	2 Sam. 5:5; 1 Kings 2:11 1 Chronicles 29:27	3196
SOLOMON	40 years	Crowned in year 3196	1 Kings 11:42 2 Chronicles 9:30	3236
REHOBAM	17 years	Crowned at 41 years of age in year 3236	1 Kings 14:21 2 Chronicles 12:13	3253
ABIJAM (Abijah)	3 years	Crowned in year 3253	1 Kings 15:2 2 Chronicles 13:2	3256
ASA	41 years	Crowned in year 3256	1 Kings 15:9,10 2 Chronicles 16:13	3297
JEHOSHAPHAT	25 years	Crowned at 35 years of age in year 3297	1 Kings 22:41,42 2 Chronicles 20:21	3322
JEHORAM	8 years	Crowned at 32 years of age in year 3322	2 Kings 8:17 2 Chronicles 21:5 2 Chronicles 21:20	3330
AHAZIAH	1 year	Crowned at 42 years of age in year 3330	2 Kings 8:24,26 2 Chronicles 22:2	3331
ATHALIA	6 years	Crowned in year 3331	2 Chronicles 22:12	3337
JEHOASH (Joash)	40 years	Crowned at 7 years of age in year 3337	2 Kings 12:1 2 Chronicles 24:1	3377
AMAZIAH	29 years	Crowned at 25 years of age in year 3377	2 Kings 14:1-2 2 Chronicles 25:1	3406
UZZIAH (Azariah)	52 years	Crowned at 16 years of age in year 3406	2 Chronicles 26:3 2 Kings 15:2	3458

JOTHAM	16 years	Crowned at 25 years of age in year 3458	2 Kings 15:32-33 2 Chronicles 27:1 2 Chronicles 27:8	3474
AHAZ	16 years	Crowned at 20 years of age in year 3474	2 Kings 16:1-2 2 Chronicles 28:1	3490
HEZEKIAH	29 years	Crowned at 25 years of age in year 3490	2 Kings 18:2 2 Chronicles 29:1	3519
MANASSEH	55 years	Crowned at 12 years of age in year 3519	2 Kings 21:1 2 Chronicles 33:1	3574
AMON	2 years	Crowned at 22 years of age in year 3574	2 Kings 21:19 2 Chronicles 33:21	3576
JOSIAH	31 years	Crowned at 8 years of age in year 3576	2 Kings 22:1 2 Chronicles 34:1	3607
JEHOAHAZ	3 months	Crowned at 23 years of age in year 3607	2 Kings 23:31 2 Chronicles 36:2	3607
JEHOIAKIM'S 4TH YEAR		1st Babylonian Incursion	Daniel 1:1-4 Jeremiah 25:1	3612
JEHOIAKIM (Eliakim)	11 years	Crowned at 25 of age in year 3607	2 Kings 23:36 2 Chronicles 36:5	3618
JEHOIACHIN	3 months	Crowned at 8 years of age in year 3619	2 Kings 24:8 2 Chronicles 36:9	3619
ZEDEKIAH	11 years	Crowned at 21 years of age taken captive in year 3630	2 Kings 24:17-18 2 Chronicles 36:11 Jeremiah 52:1	3630

King Solomon's Coronation in 3196 A.M.

In the year 3196 when David had come to the end of his forty year reign and the day of his death had arrived for him, Solomon his son succeeded him on the throne.

By the time of the beginning of Solomon's reign all the people of Israel did their sacrifices to the Lord in high places because the temple had not yet been built (1 Kings 3:2). On the occasion of his ascension to the throne, Solomon went to the hill of Gibeon to sacrifice; this Gibeon was the great high place (1 Kings 3:4). It was on this hill that God appeared to Solomon in a dream and made him an offer for him to ask whatever his heart wished for. Solomon's wish was:

"Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?" (1 Kings 3:9).

Solomon was a humble young man that admitted his weakness and incapacity to rein when he sat on the throne (1 Kings 3:7). Yet he was growing not only in stature but also in wisdom. Having received so much understanding and the capacity of discernment between good and evil Solomon was ready to live a holy and perfect life.

When David's wars had ceased and he had achieved peace from all his enemies, he desired to build a house for the Lord. Nevertheless, God sent the prophet Nathan to tell him that the honour would go to his son Solomon instead. Therefore, regarding Solomon, God said: "He shall build an house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever" (2 Sam. 7:13).

Solomon Dedicates Temple in 3207 A.M.

It was in the year 3207 that king Solomon finished and dedicated the temple to God. Remember that Solomon's reign began in the year 3196, and the construction work for the temple began in the 4th year of his reign (2 Chronicles 3:2); therefore the house of the Lord's foundation stone was placed in the year 3200. The House of the Lord was built on a beautiful mountain called Moriah, in Jerusalem; where God appeared to his father David (2 Chronicles 3:1). It took seven years for the Temple of Solomon to be built (1 Kings 6:38). Therefore, in the eleventh year of Solomon's reign, the house of the Lord was completely finished (2 Kings 6:38).

When Solomon dedicated the house of the Lord, he had in mind the true house of God; the Heavenly Sanctuary. Therefore, the Holy Spirit led him to conclude:

"But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?" (1 Kings 8:27).

The Ark of God's Testament Seen in His Temple

The Heavenly Sanctuary and the Law of God are intimately associated in relation to God's final judgment. Notice what happened at the dedication of the temple. Solomon had solemnly declared the greatness and glory of God. Under his command:

“... the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of the LORD unto his place, into the oracle of the house, to the Most Holy Place, even under the wings of the cherubims” (1 Kings 8:6).

Pay close attention at what kind of ark that was, and where in the temple it was placed, because it has to do with God’s final judgment upon the world. The Word of God explains that “there was nothing in the ark save the two tables of stone, which Moses put there at Horeb, when the LORD made a covenant with the children of Israel...” (1 Kings 8:9). It is amazing that the ark of the testament contained the Ten Commandments of God, those “two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God” (Exodus 31:18).

To John it was shown in vision what will take place on the Day of Judgment; he saw: “the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament” (Revelation 11:19). It was that very ark containing the Commandments of God.

Recently, Satan came up with a great idea to deceive God’s people. He is teaching that the Ark of the Covenant has been found because it was hid underneath the temple and that at the crucifixion of Jesus the blood of the Lord fell on the ark and it was secretly slid into a secret chamber prepared for it at the building of the temple. This is serpent language and it teaches one of those superstitions of the heathen religions. Remember that the Lord Jesus was crucified outside of Jerusalem, away from the temple, as it was prophesied by Moses and explained by Paul: “Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate” (Hebrews 13:12). The Lord Jesus was not crucified in the temple but “they took Jesus, and led him away” to be crucified (John 19:16).

Solomon’s Spiritual Downfall

Some time after the year 3207 when Solomon had built and dedicated the house of the Lord, he made one of his first and greatest mistakes; he married the daughter of Pharaoh, King of Egypt (1 Kings 3:1). By marrying a pagan woman Solomon brought on himself a snare that caused his spiritual downfall.

One may question Solomon’s fall from integrity and loyalty to God to decadence and immorality. If Solomon knew how to discern good from evil, what went wrong with him and his wisdom? Is it possible that Solomon had forgotten how the Egyptians worshiped strange demon gods, the gods of the realm of the dead? Did he think himself wise enough not to fall into the temptation of rendering homage to pagan deities and in the end fall prostrate at the feet of false gods? Probably what happened to Solomon’s heart is that he trusted in his own wisdom and stopped depending on God for guidance in his decision-making. These things are written as examples for us. God’s Word counsels us: “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (1 Corinthians 10:12).

Solomon continued in his wrong steps and loved many strange women (1 Kings 11:1). He made mistake after mistake even when God through His statutes had warned every Israelite concerning pagan women: “Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you: for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods” (1 Kings 11:1). Yet, Solomon succumbed to licentiousness, living in fornication and a polygamous life with seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines (1 Kings 11:2). Consequently, the many women turned Solomon’s heart to worship diverse demons. He began worshipping Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, and Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites (1 Kings 11:5). He built

two pagan temples on the hill that is before Jerusalem: the first one for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, and the second for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon. So degraded was Solomon's morality that he sacrificed to the gods of all his strange wives (1 Kings 11:7,8).

Solomon was so debased that he spent the years of his early manhood in idolatry, fornication and vice. The world and its customs had made inroad in his heart. With terror in his heart he later uttered words of remorse for his sins and evil ways. Too late he alerted others of the sorrowful state of mind resulting from the sinful and lustful lifestyle he had led:

“Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them” Ecclesiastes 12:1.

Israel had chosen to have a monarchichal system and they reaped what they sowed. Israel's faithfulness and loyalty to God continuously slipped into apostasy. God's statutes and commandments were set aside for pagan customs and traditions. They wanted to be like the nations of the world, and they achieved what their evil hearts desired: they fell in idolatry and lustful desires like the rest of the nations. For the sake of stopping the advancement of idolatry God passed a drastic judgment on Israel's monarchy:

“Wherefore the LORD said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant” (1 Kings 11:11).

Although Solomon was leaving a legacy of idolatry in the midst of Jerusalem, he repented of his wickedness. Solomon's conversion is summarized in two verses:

“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil” (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14).

“And Solomon slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David his father: and Rehoboam his son reigned in his stead” (1 Kings 11:43).

Israel's Monarchy in Jeopardy in 3236 A.M.

God sent prophet Ahijah with a message to Jeroboam, the servant of Solomon. Ahijah took off his new garment and cut it in twelve pieces and gave ten pieces to Jeroboam to signify that the kingdom of Israel was divided and ten tribes would follow Jeroboam (1 Kings 11:30-31). The reason for the schism was:

“Because that they have forsaken me, and have worshipped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, Chemosh the god of the Moabites, and Milcom the god of the children of Ammon, and have not walked in my ways, to do that which is right in mine eyes, and to keep my statutes and my judgments, as did David his father” (1 Kings 11:33).

But in the end the ten tribes would sink into further idolatry and the spiritual reforms for the people of Israel would always come from the Kingdom of Judah, as it was prophesied of Solomon's son:

“And unto his son will I give one tribe, that David my servant may have a light alway before me in Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen me to put my name there” (1 Kings 11:36).

Through the monarchy’s wickedness, Satan intended to bring chaos upon Israel. The nation of Israel sank into idolatry and rebellion against God. Consequently, their apostasy was about to be visited by God’s judgments. When Rehoboam, Solomon’s son, sat on the throne with a proud and despotic heart, he realized that his father had amassed wealth not only by the many economic treaties with foreign nations and by his intermarriages with hundreds of foreign women, but also by making his subjects, the children of Israel, tributaries to the royal treasury by the taxing system. So Rehoboam’s iniquitous heart led him to impose heavier taxes on his people.

Such measure was one of Satan’s stratagems to instigate turmoil and rebellion in the kingdom of Israel to specifically destroy the kingdom of David. David’s grandson King Rehoboam was induced to reject the counsel of the old men in Israel who had advised him to speak kindly to the Israelites and to become a servant of his nation (1 Kings 12:7-8). He rather accepted Satan’s instigations through the immature and unwise counsel of his peers, the youngsters in Israel, and spoke harshly to his people, saying: “My little finger shall be thicker than my father’s loins” (1 Kings 12:10).

Consequently, a hot battle in the conflict of the ages was taking place in Shechem. Satan’s forces of evil were fighting for total allegiance on the part of the people of Israel and the final destruction of the kingdom of David. Thus, all the people of Israel were gathered in Shechem for the celebrations and coronation of Rehoboam (1 Kings 12:1). But the gathering erupted into an uncontrollable uproar. Rehoboam had earlier challenged and angered the people with his wicked policies. He even went so far as to infuriate his people with the words: “my father hath chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions” (1 Kings 12:11).

Seeing Rehoboam’s obstinacy and harshness, the people took the kingdom in their hands and rebelled against Solomon’s son and crowned Jeroboam to be king over them (1 Kings 12:20).

The ten tribes of Israel were so polluted with idolatrous practices and heathen worship that they cared less whether to adhere to the national sacred token of God’s true religion in Jerusalem, the temple and Jehovah’s true worship. Their wickedness led them to conclude: “What portion have we in David? Neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse” (1 Kings 12:16). With this last sentence, the nation of Israel declared themselves unbelievers in the true God and antagonistic and rebellious against God’s prophecies and truth. They adjudged themselves as unfit depositaries of God’s plan of salvation. Their idolatry had so hardened their hearts that they had no pleasure in the promises of God. For a long time they had forfeited God’s blessing and now they were adding a curse on themselves by rejecting the plan of salvation and the promise of a Redeemer from the loins of David.

Jeroboam Plunges Israel into Apostasy

But wicked Jeroboam rebelled against God and established his fortress in Shechem (1 Kings 12:25) from where he plunged Israel into further apostasy. To consolidate his domain and prevent his kingdom from returning to Solomon’s son, he passed a decree that Israel must comply with the new religious regulations by refraining to go and sacrifice in the house of the Lord at Jerusalem (1 Kings 12:27). Together with his

advisers he concocted a scheme and built two calves of gold and declared them to be Israel's gods that brought them out of Egypt (1 Kings 12:28).

Jeroboam did not leave Israel without a religion; but he was blinded by Satan. Therefore, he established a new form of worship that resembled God's true religion but that in the end warred against God's commandments. Consequently, from the very outset of the monarchy's split in the year 925, he ordained a festival for sacrificing before either one of two calves placed in Dan and in Bethel respectively (1 Kings 12:29).

The feast that Jeroboam ordained resembled that of the solemn feast of God. However, it was totally opposed to God's command, for he established it on the eighth month in the fifteenth day of the month (1 Kings 12:32). The solemn feast that Satan and Jeroboam were emulating was that of the Feast of Tabernacles (Leviticus 23:34), which was established by God to be a holy convocation of seven days, the first and the eighth days were holy Sabbaths (Leviticus 23:39) and a perpetual statute; it fell on the fifteenth day of the seventh month (Leviticus 23:34).

Worldwide Apostasy Similar to that of Jeroboam

The Holy Scriptures warn us regarding the unnumbered dangers in emulating the world by adopting its forms of education, culture and worship styles. Satan's liturgy is employed to bring about change in educational systems, cultural patterns and the Christian faith. Thus, in altering society's way of thinking he uses text books, symbols, ceremonies and music. And to further subjugate the whole world, Satan employs forms of authoritarian hierarchical government where all power is vested in one man. He is an expert in uniting religion and politics through the authority of one person or a few hierarchical elites. That is why monarchies have played a major role in the world's history, shaping societies and cultures under selfish autocratic systems. It is said that the only constant is change, but Satan's form of selfish government does not change, it only changes its names.

In today's societies, it is a sin to speak against sin. It is the authoritarian forms of government which impose their own dogmas and enforce their rulings. They have supplanted the Commandments of God by the so called human rights. The Human Rights Manifesto defends all forms of adultery, fornication, idolatry, witchcraft, drunkenness, and heresies, which are condemned by the Word of God (Galatians 5:19-20). It proclaims with a loud voice to the four winds that liberty of conscience and expression is everybody's right but they become infuriated when the Word of God is opened to reprove the sin in today's society. Homosexuality laws are introduced in the nation's parliaments; and to make things worse they are also introducing religious legislation to enforce the world's liturgies, including compulsory Sunday worship.

Shemaiah: the Man of God Confirms God's Judgment

Shechem had recently been the place where God executed judgment on Israel's national apostasy. Rehoboam was upset with the outcome of his decisions; the idea of a split monarchy was not appealing at all. Therefore, he summoned Judah and his valiant men of war; a hundred and eighty thousand warriors,

to fight against the ten tribes of Israel and reestablish order by bringing the kingdom under the rule of one monarch, the son of Solomon (1 Kings 12:21).

While preparations were made for the battle, God sent Shemaiah the man of God with a message for King Rehoboam (1 Kings 12:22). The message was urgent that the tribes of Judah and Benjamin and the remnant of the people (1 Kings 12:23) must remain in their places. Therefore, the man of God spoke and thus says the Lord: “Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren the children of Israel: return every man to his house; for this thing is from me” (1 Kings 12:24). Consequently, Rehoboam and the remnant of the people understood that judgment had been meted out and that it was a judgment from God, so they obeyed the word of God by the mouth of his prophet (1 Kings 12:24).

King Josiah in Prophecy 358 Years before his Birth

Some time in the year 3236 as the apostate king Jeroboam was sacrificing at the pagan altar erected there (1 Kings 13:1) a man of God came from Judah to Bethel. The young prophet presented himself with the title “man of God” probably to protect his identity. Shemaiah was the name of the young prophet (1 Kings 12:22) who is mentioned fifteen times by his pseudonymous title “man of God” (1 Kings 13:1,4,5,6,7,8,11,12,14,21,26,29,31). He was coming from Judah, where he had admonished King Rehoboam about his intentions to battle against Israel’s ten tribes and overthrow Jeroboam’s kingdom.

Fearlessly, and with a vehement voice, the young prophet declared that a child would utterly destroy the works of the impious King Jeroboam. That child was King Josiah, of whom it was prophesied 358 years before his birth. Courageously he exclaimed in the hearing of King Jeroboam:

“O altar, altar, thus saith the LORD; Behold, a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name; and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee, and men's bones shall be burnt upon thee” (1 Kings 13:2).

In a frenzy of fury the wicked King Jeroboam extended his hand intending his soldiers to lay hold of the man of God and kill him (1 Kings 13:4). But God intervened and saved the man of God’s life by withering Jeroboam’s hand who could not retrieve it until the man of God besought the Lord and the king’s hand was restored to normal (1 Kings 13:4,6).

In a triumphant manner, Jeroboam thought that he could buy the favor of God or mock God’s message by inviting the man of God to accept a royal reception in his honour and offering him a costly gift (1 Kings 13:7). But the man of God remained steadfast and clung to the Word of God and replied to the perverse king that even if the offer were half his house he would not eat bread or drink water in that wicked place of Bethel (1 Kings 13:8). By the refusal of Jeroboam’s offer, the young prophet gave testimony of God’s displeasure against that place, therefore he would not partake of food or water, nor return home to Judah by the same way, for God had advised him so (1 Kings 13:9).

Satan was infuriated against God and wanted by all means to spoil the message and lead Israel to disregard the prophecy. Therefore, he moved an old prophet from Bethel to go and entice the man of God (1 Kings 13:11,14). The old man found the young prophet resting under the shade of the oak and offered him food (1 Kings 13:15). The old prophet deceived the man of God, assuring him that he was a prophet

also and that an angel had spoken to him to bring the man of God and eat bread and drink water; so he went back to the old man's house (1 Kings 13:18,19). While they were eating at the old man's table, the old prophet uttered God's judgment against the man of God that because he disobeyed the commandment of God, his body would not be buried in the tomb of his fathers (1 Kings 13:20-22).

Judgment was visited upon the man of God who after mounting a borrowed donkey from the old prophet, was slain by a lion outside the city (1 Kings 13:24). The sad news reached the old prophet who declared that the corpse laying in the way was the man of God who was disobedient to God (1 Kings 13:26).

People question God's dealings in this episode, but the death of that young prophet was an object lesson for the wicked people of Israel. The message given by the man of God was a matter of life and death. It was a very serious message, to the extent that God would not have eaten in that place, as Israel had not found favor in God's sight. By eating in Bethel, the strong message would lose its power. Remember that the Lord wants to eat with us (Revelation 3:20). But we need to find favor with the Lord, just as the patriarch Abraham did who pleaded with God: "My Lord, if now I have found favor in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant" (Genesis 18:3).

The old prophet arrived at the scene and took the man of God's body and buried him in his own grave, and mourned bitterly over him as he uttered his fateful words: Alas my brother! (1 Kings 13:30). The old prophet gave strict command to his sons, saying: "When I am dead, then bury me in the sepulcher wherein the man of God is buried; lay my bones beside his bones" (1 Kings 13:31). He assured his children that the prophecy, concerning the destruction of the altar and the high places built by Jeroboam, would certainly be fulfilled (1 Kings 13:32).

The Shocking Scenes in Samaria's Siege in 3315 A.M.

The scenes in Samaria are proof that idolatry and the rejection of the statutes of God will inevitably result in moral decadence and selfishness to the point of committing murder just to survive.

It happened in the year 3315, the 18th year of Jehosaphat King of Judah, while Joram the son of Ahab reigned in Samaria (2 Kings 3:1; 2 Kings 8:16) and Elisha, who also dwelt in Samaria (2 Kings 5:3), was the anointed prophet (2 Kings 3:11). At that time Benhadad king of Syria besieged Samaria (2 Kings 6:24); the palace city of the ten tribes of Israel. God had warned the Israelites: "And if ye will not for all this hearken unto me, but walk contrary unto me, then I will walk contrary unto you also in fury; and I, even I, will chastise you seven times for your sins. And ye shall eat the flesh of your sons, and the flesh of your daughters shall ye eat" (Leviticus 26:27-29).

During that siege, the king of Israel was shocked to hear what was happening inside his palace city. The curses spoken by Moses (Deuteronomy 28:45) were fell upon the wicked city of Samaria and its inhabitants. Because of the famine, they committed outrageous deeds to the point that even the mothers practiced cannibalism by eating their own babies (2 Kings 6:28-29). Then King Joram blamed the prophet Elisha for the condition of Israel, and he swore to behead the prophet (2 Kings 6:31).

The problem with idolatry is that it blinds people to the fact that sin brings its own retribution. Joram blamed Elisha when he had nothing to do with the day of payback for Israel's sin. Moses had prophesied

about the dire effects of idolatry when the sanctuary message is rejected and a worldly system of humanistic worship is accepted.

Moses declared that even the delicate woman would turn an evil eye against her husband, her son and her daughter (Deuteronomy 28:56), and would eat her newborn baby in secret (Deuteronomy 28:57). And the real culprit for this calamitous situation was the idolatrous person who ventured to despise God's Law; God had warned them of the dire consequences "If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this law that are written in this book, that thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful name, THE LORD THY GOD" (Deuteronomy 28:58).

Amos Condemns the Symbol of their Star in 3406 A.M.

Around the year 3406, in the days of King Uzziah; two years before a great earthquake (Amos 1:1), God sent his prophet Amos to reprove Israel's wickedness and deliver a message of judgment against Israel because they had fallen into all kinds of idolatry. The Jews had made themselves a symbol, the Star of David, as it is called today. It had its origins in the days of prophet Amos and he reproved Israel because of that hexagram when he said: "But ye have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch and Chiun your images, the star of your god, which ye made to yourselves" (Amos 5:26).

Assyria Threatens Israel in the Days of Isaiah in 3504 A.M.

It was in the year 3504, the 14th year of King Hezekiah (Isaiah 36:1), when "Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the defenced cities of Judah, and took them" (Isaiah 36:1). The Assyrian king reproached Hezekiah (Isaiah 36:4) because he did a great reform in Israel and ridiculed him with these words: "...if thou say to me, we trust in the LORD our God: is it not he, whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah hath taken away...?" (Isaiah 36:7). With such a reproach, Satan tried to shake Israel's faith, mocking them for their spiritual reform and creating doubts in their minds regarding God's holy statutes. Satan intended to push Israel into a state of hopelessness, because the enemy knows that "despondency may shake the most heroic faith, and weaken the most steadfast will".

Satan intended to make Israel feel as if God was displeased with them for having eradicated from their worship ceremonies the visible images which are nothing but a mockery and an affront against the Creator. Yet the Word of God was in the mouth of Isaiah, a word of hope as he said: "O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the LORD" (Isaiah 2:5). Furthermore, the prophet admonished Israel that God had forsaken them for many reasons (Isaiah 2:6). Isaiah continued:

"Their land also is full of idols; they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made" (Isaiah 2:8).

Sennacherib, on the other hand, also reproached Israel, this time for trusting in the Creator God. His words were: "...Let not Hezekiah deceive you: for he shall not be able to deliver you" (Isaiah 36:14), "Neither let Hezekiah make you trust in the LORD, saying, The LORD will surely deliver us: this city shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria" (Isaiah 36:15).

And mockingly Sennacherib added: “Where are the gods of Hamath and Arphad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim? And have they delivered Samaria out of my hand?” (Isaiah 36:19). Samaria had fallen under the yoke of Assyria because of their unrepentant attitude against God’s statutes. But Hezekiah “rent his cloths and covered himself with sackcloth, and went to the house of the Lord (Isaiah 37:1). Moreover, he sent “the elders of the priests covered with sackcloth, unto Isaiah the prophet...” (Isaiah 37:2), to whom Isaiah said: “... Thus saith the Lord, Be not afraid of the words that thou hast heard, wherewith the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me” (Isaiah 37:6). “Behold, I will send a blast upon him, and he shall hear a rumour...” (Isaiah 37:7). The rumour was that the angel of the Lord went to the Assyrian troops and killed 185,000 of the Assyrians “and when they [the Israelites] arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses” (Isaiah 37:36).

Fifteen more Years for Hezekiah in 3504 A.M.

In the year 3504, shortly after Sennacherib (who was the right arm of Satan at that time), had threatened to exterminate Israel, “in those days was Hezekiah sick unto death...” (Isaiah 38:1). And God sent His prophet Isaiah who told the dying monarch: “Thus saith the LORD, Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live” (Isaiah 38:1). But, because Hezekiah prayed to the Lord (Isaiah 38:3), “then came the word of the Lord to Isaiah, saying, go and say to Hezekiah, Thus saith the LORD, the God of David thy father...I will add unto thy days fifteen years. And I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria: and I will defend this city” (Isaiah 38:5-6).

Did you notice that the Lord Almighty identifies and differentiates Himself from all other false gods? He is the God of David, who was a son of Israel from the bloodline of Isaac the son of Abraham. The only true God gave Hezekiah a sign (Isaiah 38:7) as a token of His faithfulness in fulfilling His promises for Hezekiah: “Behold, I will bring again the shadow of the degrees... ten degrees backward. So the sun returned ten degrees, by which degrees it was gone down” (Isaiah 38:8).

3504 The 14th year of King Hezekiah’s reign
+ 15 God gives Hezekiah fifteen more years to live
= 3519 Year when King Hezekiah died and Isaiah received his last vision

How impressive to see that the Word of God is consistent and trustworthy throughout the centuries! The entire Bible’s historical data in more than three and a half millennia, up to the days of Isaiah, coincides with the perfect biblical chronology which began in the Garden of Eden. Did you notice that the Bible’s chronological year 3504 corresponds to the 14th year of Hezekiah’s reign in Israel? If not, review the chronological charts and you will also be amazed to see that the extended fifteen year lifespan for Hezekiah also corresponds to the total reigning period for the monarch, which ended in 3519. Such wonderful data fits nicely together in these chronologies of the mysteries of God.

Hezekiah recovered from his illness, just as God had promised, but he committed a grievous sin, when he displayed all the palace treasures to the envoy of Baladan King of Babylon (Isaiah 39:1). For that reason, Isaiah said to him:

“Behold, the days come, that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store until this day, shall be carried to Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the LORD” (Isaiah 39:6).

Isaiah Prophecies From 3458 - 3519 A.M.

Gradually Israel had fallen into further idolatry as they had despised God's statutes and judgments and embraced the heathen practices of their neighboring enemies. In those dangerous times God sent prophet Isaiah who ministered by reproofing monarchs, magnates and the common Israelite. The first vision was probably given to Isaiah in the year 3458 when King Uzziah died, and he continued during the reigns of Kings Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah (Isaiah 1:1). Isaiah continued in his ministry until the year 3519. He had a son called Shearjashub with whom he ministered and confronted the monarchs. The two certainly went together to meet Ahaz (Isaiah 7:3).

Isaiah's wonderful vision of God's throne was given him in the year 3458 as the prophet wrote: "In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple" (Isaiah 6:1). In the year 3490 when king Ahaz died, Isaiah had another vision to reprove Palestine (Isaiah 14:28-29). Part of the message was: "I will kill thy root with famine, and he shall slay thy remnant (Isaiah 14:30). Isaiah also prophesied about the destruction of Jerusalem in the same year when Ahaz died.

Isaiah Prophecies About the Persian King Cyrus

Sometimes when God reveals a prophecy, it is with the purpose that the sanctuary message be upheld. Isaiah prophesied about Cyrus even two centuries in advance. He wrote about Cyrus: "He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid" (Isaiah 44:28). Not many monarchs are given a more honorable title from God, than that given to the Persian king, Isaiah said: "Thus saith the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus" (Isaiah 45:1).

Notice that the Creator is addressing a monarch who was to come into existence more than two hundred years in the future. King Cyrus was from the land of Persia located in what is modern Iran, he was appointed by the Lord God "to subdue nations before him..." (Isaiah 45:1). Cyrus was the king who would conquer the kingdom of Babylon located in what is modern Iraq. Now notice that both Iran and Iraq have in relatively recent history adopted Islam as their national religion; that is, what they call the Islamic faith of Ishmael. But when Isaiah prophesied regarding the Persian King Cyrus, he spoke of this monarch as one who would be serving the God of Israel; he spoke of the Hebrew's faith, which is the faith of Isaac. What is more, God differentiates Himself from all other gods when He addresses Cyrus:

"And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the LORD, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel" Isaiah 45:3.

The God of Israel! He really knows how to differentiate Himself from all other self-appointed gods. He tells Cyrus:

"I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me" (Isaiah 45:5).

At this point, allow me to ask this question: Is it possible that all religions worship the same God? If your response is a yes, the God of Israel who spoke directly to Isaiah holds a contrary view. He says "...there is none beside me. I am the LORD, and there is none else" (Isaiah 45:6). Who is this God who addresses a Persian king? How do we know that the God of Israel is the true God? Well, He is the Creator, you see, that is the BIG difference! He says: "I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens and all their host have I commanded (Isaiah 45:12). Only the God of Israel has the sanctuary message of redemption for the salvation of this world, as the Word of God says:

"Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together; I the LORD have created it" (Isaiah 45:8).

This biblical chronology proves that the God of Israel is the God of Adam, the father of all races. Therefore, the God of Isaac is the One of Whom it is written: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth (Genesis 1:1). Now ask yourself another question: If all the earth worships the same God, would not the world's religions keep the Law of the God of Adam? Only one of the Ten Commandments identifies the true God, the Creator (Exodus 20:8-11). If the world's major religions wish to worship the Creator they would keep the day of the Lord holy. The day of the Lord as given to Adam was and is the seventh day of the week, Sabbath (Saturday); that is the day which identifies God as the Creator. Read Genesis 2:1-3 and you will find that the God of Isaac and Moses is the God of Abraham and of Adam. Therefore, the God Who "blessed the seventh day, and sanctified" (Genesis 2:3), gave to Adam and to Abraham the seventh day of the week to worship the Creator... "Because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made" (Genesis 3:2).

Reader if you are a Muslim, consider for a moment what the Creator God said to King Cyrus. He revealed Himself as the God of Israel. You may ask: But what is the day of the Creator? The correct answer is the Sabbath! Then why is that in the lands of King Cyrus Muslims are taught to keep the sixth day of the week Friday? Well... What does the Holy God of Israel command? Reader, the Holy God of Israel will reveal to you which day of the week is the day of the Lord, in His fourth commandment He says: "But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD thy God..." (Exodus 20:10). If the world wants to wander after other gods, the Lord has just one sentence, as Isaiah said: "Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker!" (Isaiah 45:9). Bear in mind that in the Word of God the days of the week do not have a name but a number; only the seventh day has a name. Notice what the evangelist Matthew says: "In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulcher" (Matt. 28:1).

Isaiah Prophecies About the Savior of the World

The essence of the sanctuary message is God's pouring down of righteousness and salvation on earth (Isaiah 45:8). You see, the altar of sacrifice and the sprinkling of blood in the Holy Place have significance only if such symbols will lead you to the Savior Who was symbolized by the sanctuary ceremonies.

Reader, if you are a sincere Jew, consider the writings of Isaiah, he prophesied about the Savior of the world; the God of Israel, and he wrote God's declaration:

“I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no Savior” (Isaiah 43:11).

Notice that of all the gods in the world there is only One Who can save us, the only One Who is the true God, He says: “For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Savior...” (Isaiah 43:3). Moreover, the God of Israel says: “...all flesh shall know that I the LORD am thy Savior and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob” (Isaiah 49:26). Then the Almighty God of Abraham spoke about the Redeemer: “Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God (Isaiah 44:6).

Friend, if you are a Jew or a Muslim or a true seeker of truth, consider the person of Whom Isaiah wrote in his book, because he wrote about the Redeemer and Savior, the God of Israel. The Lord says: “...thou shalt know that I the LORD am thy Savior and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob” (Isaiah 60:16). The person of whom Isaiah wrote as Redeemer, Daniel identifies as the Messiah. But either as Redeemer or Messiah, that Holy God of Israel fulfills the same role.

You may have many questions regarding the role of the Redeemer. To address that matter let us consider this question: What is the purpose of God’s redemption? Let the Word God respond:

“Let Israel hope in the LORD: for with the LORD there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption. And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities” (Psalms 130:7-8).

Notice that the Redeemer is God who alone is able to forgive sins. Now, the following revelation by the prophet Isaiah may be astonishing, but the Redeemer or Messiah, is also a rejected servant, despised and rejected of men. Let the word of God explain this:

“Thus saith the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel, and his Holy One, to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers, kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the LORD that is faithful, and the Holy One of Israel, and he shall choose thee” (Isaiah 49:7).

Isaiah further presents the sanctuary message in his famous chapter 53 of his book. He presents the Redeemer as a lamb to the slaughter, bringing the altar of sacrifice to remembrance, as the Servant Who would be sacrificed in order to achieve redemption. Of Him, it is written:

“He is despised and rejected of men...” (Isaiah 53:3), “he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted” (Isaiah 53:4). “He was wounded for our transgression; he was bruised for our iniquities...” (Isaiah 53:5). Moreover, “the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53:6), and “for the transgression of my people was he stricken” (Isaiah 53:8), yet, “...he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth” (Isaiah 53:9), “...he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter...” (Isaiah 53:7), “yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin...” (Isaiah 53:10).

Notice that the Redeemer of Israel is the One who is offered in sacrifice for the remission of sins. He purged our iniquities and transgression because only God can take away the sins of the world. The people of Samaria exclaimed: “...Now we believe... for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world” (John 4:42). Of Him, Peter exclaimed:

“The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins” (Acts 5:30-31).

When Isaiah and Daniel prophesied about the Messiah, they were conscious of the fact that God intended His children to understand the chronologies leading towards the fulfillment of such Messianic prophecies. But Satan has tried to obliterate the Word of God from off the face of the earth. On the contrary Isaiah prophesied: “The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the Word of our God shall stand forever” (Isaiah 40:8).

Prophecy of Josiah’s Reform Fulfilled in 3594 A.M.

King Josiah fulfilled the prophecy which 358 years earlier had been proclaimed by Shemaiah (the man of God who was killed by a lion). It was the year 3594 the 18th year of King Josiah’s reign (2 Kings 22:3), when by God’s providence the King sent Shaphan to the temple to request of the high priest Hilkiah to count the silver that had been gathered to repair the breaches in the house of the Lord and give it to the workers (2 Kings 22:4,5).

A great reform was about to be made in the nation of Israel. But king Josiah’s concern for the repairs to the temple was about to be preceded by a great spiritual reform. In response to Josiah’s request, Shaphan appeared at the temple when the high priest Hilkiah revealed the awesome news that he had found in the temple the book of the Law (2 Kings 22:8). Shaphan read the book carefully and brought a report to King Josiah, telling him that the money gathered for the repairs of the house of the Lord had been delivered to the workers (2 Kings 22:9). In addition, he explained how Hilkiah the priest had found the book of the Law which he had handed on to him. He then read it to the king (2 Kings 22:10).

With trembling heart King Josiah tore his clothes when he heard the words of the book of the Law (2 Kings 22:11). He immediately summoned the high priest Hilkiah, Shaphan and his son Ahikam and Achbor the son of Michaiah to inquire of the Lord for him and for all Judah (2 Kings 22:12-13).

So the high priest Hilkiah and the other leaders went to a prophetess of the Lord, a lady called Huldah and gave Josiah’s message to her (2 Kings 22:14). Huldah prophesied to them and told them that God’s judgment was soon to be executed on the nation of Israel, and that God would bring evil on that place, because they had forsaken the Lord and had burnt incense to other gods (2 Kings 22:16,17). But God’s judgment was to be deferred because Josiah humbled himself and had a tender heart (2 Kings 22:19).

Israel’s Genuine National Reform in 3594 A.M.

In a solemn manner and with urgency King Josiah summoned the elders of Judah and Jerusalem (2 Kings 23:1) and made a covenant before the Lord to keep God’s commandments, testimonies and statutes with all their heart and all their soul (2 King 23:3). Immediately the execution of Josiah’s command was carried out.

Josiah ordered to utterly burn the vessels dedicated to Baal which had been placed in the house of the Lord (2 Kings 23:4). He also sent to kill the idolatrous priests who burned incense to Baal, to the sun and the moon and the host of heaven (2 Kings 23:5). Then, he brought out the grove from the house of the Lord and burned it to ashes and poured the ashes on the graves of the people (2 Kings 23:6).

Josiah's reform of purging Israel of sinful practices, customs, rituals and idolatrous worship styles was unstoppable. He destroyed the houses of the Sodomites that were by the temple (2 Kings 23:7). He defiled and broke down the high places from Geba to Beersheba (2 Kings 23:8). Josiah went to the valley of the children of Hinnom and defiled Topheth, so to stop the wicked practice of passing their children through the fire (2 Kings 23:10). He also took away the horses that the kings of Judah had dedicated to the sun and burned the chariots of the sun (2 Kings 23:11).

With earnest zeal for God Josiah endeavored to eradicate from Israel the culture of apostasy introduced by his predecessors, the kings before him. Therefore, he destroyed the altars on the upper chamber of Ahaz and burned the altars which Manasseh had built in the house of the Lord (2 Kings 23:12). He also destroyed the high places on the mount of corruption where Solomon had built altars to Ashtoreth, Chemosh, and Milcom (2 Kings 23:13). He broke in pieces the images, and cut down the groves and filled their places with bones of men (2 Kings 23:14).

The Man of God's Tomb Honored in 3594 A.M.

In order that the prophecy given three and a half centuries earlier by the man of God should be fulfilled, Josiah broke down the altar that Jeroboam had built in Bethel, burned the high place and the grove (2 Kings 23:15). When he noticed the sepulchers built on the mountain he exhumed their bones and burned them upon Jeroboam's altar, exactly as Shemiah, the man of God had prophesied 358 years earlier (2 Kings 23:16).

In his zeal for God, King Josiah walked up and down the pagan cemetery, desecrating and exhuming the bones of the idolatrous priests. He noticed a particular tomb in which there was a strange epitaph: "The man of God". The king stopped in front of it and asked: "What title is that that I see?" (2 Kings 23:17). The locals of Bethel replied immediately that it was the sepulcher of the man of God, who came from Judah and prophesied about King Josiah and his reform by cleansing Israel's idolatry and destroying the pagan altar of Bethel (2 Kings 23:17). In solemn respect Josiah commanded his men to leave that sepulcher untouched and not to exhume the bones of prophet Shemiah (the man of God); they also left untouched the bones of the old prophet whose bones also remained in the same tomb (2 Kings 23:18).

All other sepulchers were desecrated and their remains exhumed; all except the one tomb having the epitaph bearing the title "The Man of God." This gravestone's inscription bore testimony to God's truthfulness. There lay the remains of two prophets who had condemned the idolatrous practices in Israel and had hoped for the day of retribution and national cleansing through the execution of judgment (1 Kings 13:32).

The Grand Passover of 3594 A.M.

In that same year 3594, the 26 year old King Josiah proclaimed throughout Israel that national apostasy should be countered and stopped by a national repentance. Therefore, he commanded that a Passover ceremony be held. So magnificent was that Passover that it had no comparison with any other, because neither in the period of the judges nor that of any of the kings before Josiah had a Passover of such magnitude ever been celebrated (2 Kings 23:22). Moreover, of Josiah it is written:

“And like unto him was there no king before him, that turned to the LORD with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him” (2 Kings 23:25).

But the day of retribution against Judah was still pending. The Lord did not turn from the fierceness of His great wrath, as His anger was kindled against Judah because of all the provocations that Manasseh had provoked Him with (2 Kings 23:26).

While Josiah was converted to the Lord with all his heart, and no other king compared to him in his zeal for God, yet his grandfather Manasseh had doomed Judah to future punishment. Manasseh had introduced unnumbered forms of idolatrous worship styles in Judah; “he built up again the high places which Hezekiah his father had destroyed; and he reared up altars for Baal, and made a grove, as did Ahab king of Israel; and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them” (2 Kings 21:3). Moreover, “he built altars in the house of the LORD” (2 Kings 21:4); “he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD” (2 Kings 21:5). In his unstoppable delusion and sin “he made his son pass through the fire, and observed times, and used enchantments, and dealt with familiar spirits and wizards: he wrought much wickedness in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger (2 Kings 21:6). The children of Israel rejected the Lord and hardened their hearts to hear the Law of God “and Manasseh seduced them to do more evil than did the nations whom the LORD destroyed before the children of Israel (2 Kings 21:9). He also “shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another...” (2 Kings 21:16). He also killed the prophets.

Although Manasseh was converted to the Lord, the seed of his evil belief system and practices would spring up as soon as conditions would permit. Therefore, God was about to punish them because of their wickedness.

CHAPTER NINE

BABYLON: GOD'S JUDGMENT ROD

Jeremiah's Ministry since King Josiah's 13th Year in 3589 A.M.

Jeremiah, a mighty warrior of faith, was the son of Hilkiah (Jeremiah 1:1); this Hilkiah was the High Priest who found the book of the Law in the temple in the days of King Josiah. Like Josiah, Jeremiah was also looking forward to a spiritual reform in Israel (2 Kings 22:10). He began his prophetic ministry in the year 3589, which was the thirteenth year of King Josiah's reign (Jeremiah 1:2,5,6). His ministry as a prophet of the Lord lasted forty one years until the year 3630, which was the 11th year of King Zedekiah (Jeremiah 1:3). To be more specific, Jeremiah received the Word of God until the very month when the temple was burnt and Jerusalem was taken captive by Babylon in the fifth month (Jeremiah 1:3; Jeremiah 52:12-13) of that year 3630.

13th of Josiah 3589 Jeremiah's prophetic ministry begins

11th of Zedekiah 3630 Jeremiah's prophetic ministry ends

Being the son of the high priest, Jeremiah also played an important role in the reform of Israel in the days of King Josiah; God delivered His messages through Jeremiah when Josiah had been reigning for thirteen years. The spiritual reform of Israel lasted until the eighteenth year of Josiah's reign (2 Kings 22:3; 23:23) in the year 3594. Thus, five years prior to the great reform, God had been preparing Josiah's heart through the ministry of Jeremiah. Given that the king and the High Priest had resolved to achieve spiritual reform in Israel, the hard work of the prophet was safeguarded for the next 13 years until the death of King Josiah in 3607.

From the outset of his ministry, when Jeremiah was a young man until his adult years, the prophet delivered a hard message, but a message of salvation and eternal life. He addressed kings, priests, governors and the whole nation with the message to return to the statutes given in former times by God. Thus, he encouraged his people to "ask for the old paths, where is the good way" (Jeremiah 6:16). But the people were obstinate in their heathen customs for they said: "We will not walk therein" (Jeremiah 6:16).

Judah was so imbued with pagan traditions that they had accepted as part of their religious liturgy worldly customs which they had come to consider inoffensive. But those customs were an abomination to God. As Israel cherished their new traditions, Jeremiah's reproofs were repulsive to them; although Jeremiah's words were not his own, but the direct word of God. For instance: "Thus saith the LORD, Learn not the way of the heathen" (Jeremiah 10:2). This the Lord said regarding the worldly custom of decorating a tree, which had become part of Israel's celebrations and traditions. God continued: "For the customs of the people are vain: for one cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the ax. They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not" (Jeremiah 10:3,4). Somehow the people had learned that the tree would bless or curse them, depending on their attitude towards it. Such trees were upright as palm trees (Jeremiah 10:5) and the Lord had said: "Be not afraid of them; for they cannot do evil, neither also is it in them to do good" (Jeremiah 10:5).

Not only had they changed God's solemn feasts for remembrance festivities, inventions of their own (1 Kings 12:32), but they also introduced the custom of representing divinity with images. Therefore, Jeremiah challenged them with God's questionings: "...Is not the LORD in Zion... Why have they provoked me to anger with their graven images, and with strange vanities?" (Jeremiah 8:19). Then Jeremiah expressed how the unrepentant sinner will feel on the day of judgment: "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved" (Jeremiah 8:20).

Jeremiah Risks his Life as he Prophesies

Early in his prophetic ministry Jeremiah was announcing that God's temporal retribution and judgment was coming on Israel. He had been prophesying with a thus says the Lord, "The whole land shall be desolate; yet will I not make a full end" (Jeremiah 4:27). The prophet also revealed to them how they would turn cannibalistic at the time of the Babylonian incursion and siege of the city of Jerusalem. "And I will cause them to eat the flesh of their sons and the flesh of their daughters, and they shall eat every one the flesh of his friend in the siege..." (Jeremiah 19:9).

Jeremiah was a man of power, and great love for God, one who had learned to speak with bravery. A few years before the final events for Jerusalem he was sent to Tophet in the valley of the sons of Hinnom (Jeremiah 19:2) to address the inhabitants of Jerusalem and its kings and warn them of the terrible evil God was intending to bring upon their beloved city (Jeremiah 19:3). That place Tophet is where the fathers of Israel had for a long time burned their children with fire for burnt offerings to Baal (Jeremiah 19:5). They had shed and filled that place with innocent blood (Jeremiah 19:4). But retribution was on its way, Tophet was to be plundered by their enemies to the extent that it would be called the place of slaughter (Jeremiah 19:6:7). The small town of Tophet is where they buried their many dead from Jerusalem (Jeremiah 19:11). But the whole city of Jerusalem was going to be defiled as the place of Tophet (Jeremiah 19:13). So desperate was their condition that they would be eating their own children (Jeremiah 19:9). Then, Jeremiah walked from Tophet to the court of the Lord's house (Jeremiah 19:14) and declared what the Lord was about to do to Jerusalem and all its towns (Jeremiah 19:15).

Egypt's Pharaoh Establishes Jehoiakim as King

In 3607 when the good King Josiah was killed by the Egyptian king Pharaoh Necho in the battle of Megiddo (2 Kings 23:29), the common people anointed Jehoahaz his son and made him king (2 Kings 23:30). But Jehoahaz "did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord" (2 Kings 23:32) and he only reigned three months (2 Kings 23:31). Pharaoh Necho ended Jehoahaz' reign and established Eliakim, the other son of Josiah, as king over Jerusalem. Moreover, Pharaoh Necho changed Eliakim's name to Jehoiakim (2 Chronicles 36:4).

In that same year 3607 when Jehoiakim had begun to reign, Jeremiah stood at the court of the Lord's house (Jeremiah 26:1,2) and spoke the words of the Lord that if they did not walk in God's law then He shall make the temple desolate like Shiloh and the city a curse (Jeremiah 26:6). Hearing Jeremiah's words, the priests, the prophets and all the people took him and sentenced him to death (Jeremiah 26:8). They did not kill the prophet because Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, intervened so that he was not delivered to the

people (Jeremiah 26:24). But evil King Jehoiakim killed Urijah who prophesied according to the words of Jeremiah (Jeremiah 26:20,23).

Chart of the Babylonian Captivity

KING	REIGNING YEAR	EVENT	TEXT	YEAR (A.M.)
JEHOIAKIM (Eliakim)	4 TH Year	1st BABYLONIAN INCURSION	Jeremiah 25:1	3612
JEHOIAKIM/ Nebuchadnezzar	4 TH Year/1 ST Year	Nebuchadnezzar 1st incursion Temple vessels carried away	Daniel 1:1 Daniel 1:2-3 Jeremiah 24:1	3612
Nebuchadnezzar/ JEHOIAKIM	1 ST Year/4 TH Year	Jeremiah's Prophecy	Jeremiah 25:1,3 Jeremiah 25:12	3612
Nebuchadnezzar	2 ND Year	Statue Dream	Daniel 2:1	3613
JEHOIAKIM Crowned in 3607	11 Years	2nd BABYLONIAN INCURSION	2 Kings 23:36	3618
JEHOIAKIM	11 Years	End of Jehoiakim's 11 year reign	2 Kings 23:36	3618
JEHOIACHIN	3 Months	8 years old taken captive to Babylon	2 Chronicles 36:9-2 Kings 24:12	3619
ZEDEKIAH	9 TH	Jerusalem is Besieged	Jeremiah 52:5-11 Kings 25:1	3628
ZEDEKIAH/ Nebuchadnezzar	10 TH Year/18 TH Year	The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD	Jeremiah 32:1	3629
ZEDEKIAH/ Nebuchadnezzar	11 TH Year/19 TH Year	Jerusalem's 70- year Desolation Begins TEMPLE IS BURNT	Jeremiah 52:5-11 Jeremiah 52:12 Jeremiah 52:13- 14,27	3630

ZEDEKIAH/ Nebuchadnezzar	11 TH Year/19 TH Year	3rd BABYLONIAN INCURSION TEMPLE BURNT	2 Kings 24:17-18 Jeremiah 52:12	3630
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First Babylonian Incursion in 3612 A.M.

For many years, Jeremiah had been prophesying that the Babylonians shall invade Jerusalem and pillage the city of all its treasures. Finally, the time had come for Babylon's first incursion into Jerusalem. It happened in the year 3612 when the armies of Babylon, commanded by its king, the great Nebuchadnezzar, entered Jerusalem. He carried away the princes of Judah, including Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim and the qualified skilled work force, carpenters and metal workers (Jeremiah 24:1).

Daniel speaks of the third year of Jehoikim when Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem (Daniel 1:1), when the king of Babylon carried away some of the vessels of the temple and the king's seed and princes, plus children skillful in all wisdom, knowledge and understanding science (Daniel 1:3,4) among whom was Daniel himself and his three friends Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah (Daniel 1:6).

In the chronologies of the kings of Israel there is found an account of historical data that clarifies how the events happened in the year of the first Babylonian siege of Jerusalem. Jehoikim, king of Judah had previously been made tributary to the treasury of Babylon; he had been a servant of Nebuchadnezzar for three years (2 Kings 24:1) until the year when he rebelled against Babylon and its king (2 Kings 24:1). Those are the tree years that Daniel mentions as being the third year of Jehoiakim (Daniel 1:1). Bear in mind that Jehoikim reigned for eleven years (2 Kings 23:36), and his successor, his son Jehoiachin, (2 Kings 24:6) reigned only three months (2 Kings 24:8). The following section clarifies that fact.

Jeremiah's Prophecy of 70 Years for Jerusalem's Desolation

When the first Babylonian incursion happened in the year 3612; which was the fourth year of King Jehoiakim and the first year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon (Jeremiah 25:1), Jeremiah prophesied about Israel's 70 years in Babylonian exile. The prophecy was that their land shall be left in desolation by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar (Jeremiah 25:9). Let us analyze Jeremiah's chronological explanation of the events that took place in that particular year.

Jeremiah stated that from the thirteenth year of King Josiah's reign until the year when he declared the prophecy of Jerusalem's desolation (Jeremiah 25:2), had passed 23 years (Jeremiah 25:3). Now, let us consider this precious chronological data: Josiah was crowned in the year 3576; therefore, from Josiah's coronation until the thirteenth year of his reign we come to the year 3589, the year in which Jeremiah began his prophetic ministry. Now, Jeremiah mentioned that from that year when he began his public ministry a total of 23 years had passed (Jeremiah 25:3). So, if we add the 23 years to the year 3589 it will rightly take us to the year 3612, the year in which the Jeremiah delivered a prophecy that would take

effect on the 3rd Babylonian incursion. The 23 years of Jeremiah's prophetic ministry that he mentioned, takes us exactly to the fourth year of Jehoikim's reign in 3612.

"From the thirteenth year of Josiah the son of Amon king of Judah, even unto this day, that is the three and twentieth year, the word of the LORD hath come unto me, and I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but ye have not hearkened" (Jeremiah 25:3).

3576 Josiah's coronation year
+ 13
= 3589 the thirteenth year of King Josiah; Jeremiah begins his ministry

3589
+ 23 twenty three years of Jeremiah's ministry
= 3612 First Babylonian Incursion in the 23rd year of Jeremiah

At this moment, let us reflect on the prophecy given in the year 3612. The people of Israel, and in particular the remnant of Judah and Jerusalem, were concerned about what would become of their captives taken to Babylon in that year. So, one early morning, Jeremiah addressed the inhabitants of Jerusalem with a reproof, warning that they were adding hurt upon hurt on themselves. First, he begins by reminding them how they have turned a deaf ear to the admonitions of the prophets (Jeremiah 25:4). Secondly, he reminds them of the prophets' reproofs against Israel's idolatry, and urges them not to provoke the Lord with the works of their hands, and then the Lord will do them no harm (Jeremiah 25:6). And finally, Jeremiah tells them what the Lord says: you have not listened to me, to your own harm (Jeremiah 25:7). Therefore, the prophet reveals to them a prophecy which they were not expecting nor willing to hear, namely that: "this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the King of Babylon seventy years." (Jeremiah 25:11). When the 70 years should be over, the Lord said, "I will punish the King of Babylon" (Jeremiah 25:12).

Prophecy Concerning the Temple Vessels

It requires bravery to carry out a ministry of the caliber of Jeremiah's prophetic mission. Fearlessly Jeremiah delivered another hard message for the already hurt pride of Jerusalem. The temple had previously been plundered, and its sacred golden vessels had been taken away by the Babylonians. And as if that was not sufficient a punishment for Israel, they still did not understand that it was their sinful condition that was bringing on them such extreme inflictions. They were still not willing to repent of their idolatrous temple rites.

King Jehoiakim was forced to surrender part of the temple vessels at the first Babylonian siege. Very soon an even greater desecration of the house of God would occur. But before that happened, God sent Jeremiah to the religious leaders and the people of Jerusalem to let them know their impending hard future. Therefore, under God's direction, Jeremiah solemnly declared that the Babylonian armies under the leadership of King Nebuchadnezzar (Jeremiah 27:6), were soon to wreck havoc in the land of Judah and in particular to the temple and the city of Jerusalem.

During these years Jeremiah had been constantly reminding Jerusalem's dwellers that the temple was going to be left destroyed and desolate (Jeremiah 26:6,9). But Jeremiah constantly repeated the prophecies in the hearing of his people, even under death threats, imprisonment and torture. Such boldness, of course, in the view of his contemporaries, was deserving of immediate capital punishment, as Jeremiah had defied the religious and civil authorities.

Nonetheless, a most daring speech was yet to be delivered by Jeremiah. This time it was concerning the temple's pillars, the sea, the bases, and the remainder of the vessels which Nebuchadnezzar did not take in his first incursion (Jeremiah 27:19-20). The temple was soon to suffer another blow and be completely emptied. Jeremiah's usual introduction to his speeches was: "Thus saith the Lord," and he continued: "the vessels that remain in the house of the Lord will be carried to Babylon (Jeremiah 27:22). However, God's messages were always accompanied with tenderness and hope; He assured them that every item that had been taken away and or that would be carried away to Babylon would be restored to its rightful place in the temple when the Lord shall punish the Babylonian invaders (Jeremiah 27:22).

These were not alarmist speeches, but were prophecies to alert the priests and the rest of the people about what would happen soon. They had been witnesses to the recent Babylonian incursion, in which most of the temple vessels were carried away by Nebuchadnezzar. Now the prophet was telling them that the rest of the vessels and even the brass pillars would suffer the same fate (2 Kings 25:13).

Jeremiah's Letter to the First Captives in Babylon in 3612 A.M.

Isaiah prophesied that the princes of Judah shall be turned into eunuchs as he reproved King Hezekiah with the words: "And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the King of Babylon" (2 Kings 20:18). Therefore, it is possible that Daniel himself was a eunuch as well; remember that he was under the care of the chief of the eunuchs in Babylon (Daniel 1:7). Jeremiah wrote a letter to these Jewish captives in Babylon, thus demonstrating his love for them (Jeremiah 29:1-3). The letter was written a short time after the first group of captives had been taken away; that is, after Jeconiah, the eunuchs and the princes were taken captives (Jeremiah 29:2). This Jeconiah was the son of Jehoikim, king of Judah (Jeremiah 24:1), and he was taken captive at the first Babylonian incursion of 3612. Mordecai, Queen Esther's uncle was also among the first captives (Esther 2:5,6).

Jeremiah's inspiring letter was written to encourage them. The letter begins by assuring the Hebrews that the message is from God (Jeremiah 29:4). The God of Israel declared to them that it is He Who caused them to be carried away (Jeremiah 29:4).

The letter was meant to encourage them to build houses and seek to settle down in Babylon, to plant gardens and eat the fruit from them (Jeremiah 29:5). Also the Lord counseled them to take wives for their sons and to give their daughters to husbands and begin families (Jeremiah 29:6).

Now, after the Lord counseled them with those words, He also reiterated the previous prophecy:

"That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place" Jeremiah 29:10.

Having told them that their stay in Babylon was going to be long, the Lord also confirmed the fact that He loved them, therefore He assured them with the following words: “the thoughts that I think toward you are thoughts of peace and not of evil... to give you an expected end” (Jeremiah 29:11). Their expected end was to return home to their homeland and worship in Jerusalem. Nonetheless, they must first come to their senses that they need to repent, confess their sin and ask forgiveness. Such spiritual preparation was necessary, and God saw fit for them to spend seventy years in captivity until the wonderful promise should become a reality in their lives. The Lord affirmed them:

“And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart” (Jeremiah 29:13).

Second Babylonian Incursion in 3618 A.M.

A second Babylonian incursion against Jerusalem occurred in the year 3618, the eighth year of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign (2 Kings 24:12), which was exactly the eleventh year of King Jehoakim’s reign (2 kgs. 23:36). At that time Nebuchadnezzar took all the treasures of the house of the Lord and cut in pieces all the vessels of gold which Solomon had put in the temple (2 Kings 24:13). In that raid, the king of Babylon took from Jerusalem ten thousand captives, including all the princes (2 Kings 24:14). He also took captive the eight year old King Jehoiachin, who had only reined three months and ten days in Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 36:9). This incursion happened at the very end of the year (2 Chronicles 36:10), in 3618.

Although Nebuchadnezzar took all the princes, Jerusalem still kept its monarchy, as Nebuchadnezzar replaced Jehoiachin with his uncle Mattaniah whose name he changed to Zedekiah (2 Kings 24:17). It was a tough job for Zedekiah to try to improve his realm’s hard hit economy. Jerusalem’s work force had been taken captive, its few remaining dwellers were saddened and despondent, and their national sovereignty had been deeply ashamed by being subjugated to the power of Babylon. For the first time since the date of its construction and dedication in the year 3207, the magnificent temple of Solomon, decked in gold, had been emptied of all its sacred emblems. The Babylonians had removed from the temple walls all the gold they could find. Thus, the word of God was fulfilled as prophesied by His prophet Jeremiah.

But the reader may question, What about the Ark of the Covenant and its Mercy Seat? Were they also carried away by the Babylonian troops? Or did the priests bury the Ark under the ground? Perhaps Jeremiah hid it in some desert cave? Or did God providentially remove it away from Israel? To many of these questions we won’t have a concrete answer until we get to Heaven, on the day of Jesus’ Second Coming. On that day the Ark of His Testament, shall be seen in His Heavenly Temple, as John the revelator saw in vision (Revelation 11:19). However, Jeremiah prophesied that the time will come when it will be fulfilled that the people of Israel” shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of the LORD: neither shall it come to mind: neither shall they remember it; neither shall they visit it; neither shall that be done any more” (Jeremiah 3:16). With these words the prophet was revealing an important piece of information, for they will see the Ark no more until God shall show it in the temple of Heaven.

Jeremiah Reveals Jerusalem's Doom to Zedekiah

Times were quickly turning from bad to worse. God had urged Israel to repent, but were obstinate in their rebellion. Yet, King Zedekiah was moved to enquire of the Lord for Israel's fate. He sent to ask Jeremiah to intercede for them, as Nebuchadnezzar was constantly waging war against Israel. He wanted to know if God's favor was with them so that the Babylonian armies would leave them in peace (Jeremiah 21:2). To Zedekiah's concern, the prophet responded that the Lord was going to deliver Zedekiah to the King of Babylon and that many people in Jerusalem would die of pestilence, others by the sword and the rest by famine (Jeremiah 21:7). Apart from that he also reminded Zedekiah that the Babylonians would burn the city of Jerusalem with fire (Jeremiah 21:10).

A Prophecy in Zedekiah's 10th and Nebuchadnezzar's 18th Year Reign

Jeremiah delivered a message in the year 3629, exactly one year before the desolation of Jerusalem, which was Zedekiah's 10th year reign and Nebuchadnezzar's 18th year reign (Jeremiah 32:1). The matching of this chronological data is very important because in that way it is preserved the continuity of the biblical chronology.

Jeremiah delivered many of his messages prison, as Zedekiah had locked him up in the palace prison (Jeremiah 32:2). The city was already besieged by the Babylonian armies (Jeremiah 32:2), for it was besieged from the 9th year of King Zedekiah until the 11th year of his reign (2 Kings 25:1, 2).

Zedekiah was hoping against hope that Jeremiah's prophecies should only be fallacies of his own invention. Even though Jerusalem was under siege by the Babylonian armies, Zedekiah was enraged against Jeremiah for prophesying that the Lord was about to deliver the city into the hand of the King of Babylon (Jeremiah 32:3). Another foreboding that infuriated Zedekiah was Jeremiah's persistence on prophesying that King Zedekiah would not escape from the hands of the Chaldeans (Jeremiah 32:4). Moreover, Zedekiah was in constant contention against his prisoner for daring to say that the day was approaching when Nebuchadnezzar will take him captive to Babylon (Jeremiah 32:5).

Nonetheless, in that year 3629, Jeremiah received a most unusual visit for a prisoner; this would be an object lesson of inspiration for all the Jews in the Babylonian captivity. God had already revealed to Jeremiah that his cousin Hanameel would visit him and offer him to purchase his property in Anathoth, because Jeremiah had the family right to buy it (Jeremiah 32:7). When Jeremiah heard his cousin's proposal he realized that this matter was from the Lord (Jeremiah 32:8), and he purchased the land, subscribed the evidence and sealed it in the presence of witnesses (Jeremiah 32:9,10). Then Jeremiah asked his scribe Baruch, who was one of the witnesses, to take the documents and put them in an earthen vessel to preserve them unharmed for many years (Jeremiah 32:13,14). In that very moment, the prophet uttered God's prophecy of hope for his people:

"For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Houses and fields and vineyards shall be possessed again in this land" (Jeremiah 32:15).

The time was imminent that Jerusalem and the temple were going to be consumed to ashes and left in dire desolation.

Third and Final Incursion of Jerusalem in 3630 A.M.

Time was over for Israel's monarchy, it ended in the year 3630. But still sadder was to see the destruction of the temple during Babylon's third and final incursion occurred on the 9th day of the 4th month in the 11th year of King Zedekiah, the day on which the beloved city of Jerusalem was totally destroyed (Jeremiah 39:2).

It was necessary that the history of the third Babylonian siege should be written three times, twice by Jeremiah (Jeremiah 39 and 52) and once in the chronologies of the Kings (2 Kings 25). Lest we forget the exact dating of the beginning of the 70 years of Jerusalem's desolation. Therefore, God commanded his servants to write down that important chronological data.

According to the chronologies of the kings, the city of Jerusalem was besieged by King Nebuchadnezzar from the 10th day of the 10th month of Zedekiah's 9th reigning year (2 Kings 25:1). And it remained besieged until the 11th year of King Zedekiah (2 Kings 25:2), which was the 19th year of Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kings 25:8). Once again the chronology of the kings of Israel is matched to the chronology of Babylon's monarchy in order to preserve the continuity of God's chronology.

Ezekiel wrote about this dreadful third Babylonian incursion: "Son of man, set thy face toward Jerusalem, and drop thy word toward the Holy Places, and prophesy against the land of Israel" (Ezekiel 21:2). Thus of the third and final Babylonian incursion, God told Ezekiel "let the sword be doubled the third time..." (Ezekiel 21:14). Such incursion was unparalleled because of the great slaughter in Jerusalem. God continued: "the sword of the slain: it is the sword of the great men that are slain, which entereth into their privy chambers" (Ezekiel 21:14).

Terrible retribution and judgment was visited upon the house of Israel in that year 3630. From the 9th day of the 4th month, the great famine prevailed in Jerusalem so that there was no bread inside the city (2 Kings 25:3). The city was broken up and the men of war fled (2 Kings 25:4). The Chaldees overtook many of them (2 Kings 25:5, 6). Zedekiah's sons were killed in the sight of Zedekiah's, and soon after the slaughter of his children, Zedekiah's eyes were plucked out and he was carried in fetters to Babylon (2 Kings 25:7).

In His mercy, God did not let Israel continue in the great famine nor continue the cannibalism inside the city. On the 7th day of the 5th month of that fateful year it happened what the Israelites had feared most. Captain Nebuzaradan marched towards Jerusalem and set the temple on fire (2 Kings 25:7,8). He also burned the houses of Jerusalem, together with the king's palace (2 Kings 25:9).

The 70 Years of Desolation Began in 3630 A.M.

The question may arise: how can it be that the 70 year prophecy began in 3630 and not when the first captives, including Daniel and his friends were taken to Babylon? Notice that the prophecy was not about 70 year's captivity in Babylon but 70 years for the desolation of Jerusalem (Jeremiah 25:11). Bear in mind that the captivity for the children of Israel varied; some Jews spent more time in Babylon than others. Those who were taken captive in the year 3612 remained in Babylon the longest, but those who

were carried to Babylon when Jerusalem was destroyed and the Jewish temple burnt down, if they returned to Jerusalem when the decree was issued, they remained captive only 70 years. Also remember that many Hebrews were not so eager to leave Babylon. But 115 years after the destruction of the first Jewish temple Zechariah urged them to come out of Babylon. Zechariah's message was given in 3745, four years before the dedication of the second Jewish temple (Zechariah 1:1; 2:7).

Both Isaiah and Jeremiah prophesied about the desolation of Jerusalem and the temple. But it is the temple that takes precedence, as the temple was a revelation of the plan of redemption. Therefore Jeremiah's prophecy of the 70 years applies more directly to the desolation of the temple and the holy city Jerusalem. This had been revealed by Isaiah, as he wrote:

"Thy holy cities are a wilderness; Zion is a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation. Our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised thee, is burned up with fire: and all our pleasant things are laid waste" Isaiah 64:10-11.

Notice once again that when Jeremiah prophesied about those 70 years, he referred to the desolation of the land. Review the chronology and see that the land was completely desolated when Israel's monarchy ended in 3630. On that occasion the Chaldeans broke down the walls of Jerusalem (Jeremiah 39:8). So the prophecy of Jeremiah was fulfilled that Jerusalem was left in complete destruction and desolation. See what Jeremiah wrote:

"And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the LORD, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and will make it perpetual desolations" (Jeremiah 25:11-12).

Ezekiel Confirms 2nd and 3rd Babylonian Incursions

One of the captives who received visions from the Lord was Ezekiel the priest (Ezekiel 1:3). He was also chosen to be a prophet while in the Babylonian captivity. When he wrote about their experience in Babylon, he always referred back to any of the three Babylonian incursions as captivity. That is the case of Ezekiel when he wrote: "And it came to pass in the twelfth year of our captivity..." (Ezekiel 33:21). In that year it happened that Jerusalem and the temple were doomed to desolation as they were utterly destroyed. Ezekiel explained that "one that had escaped out of Jerusalem came unto me, saying, the city is smitten" (Ezekiel 33:21).

With this recollection of facts we discover that Ezekiel confirms the dates for the second and third Babylonian incursions. First, he states that he had been captive for 12 years and exactly in the 12th year of his captivity, the city was smitten. Remember that the city was destroyed and the temple burned in the third Babylonian incursion of the year 3630. So if from the year 3630 we subtract the 12 years of Ezekiel's captivity, it reveals that he was taken captive in the second Babylonian incursion in the year 3618.

3630 Year when city smitten, temple burnt, also twelfth year of Ezekiel's captivity

- 12
= 3618 Ezekiel was taken captive in the second Babylonian incursion of the year 3618

Ezekiel also supports the fact that the third Babylonian siege happened in the year 3630 and this date confirms the biblical chronology. Having revealed the date of his exile in 3618, Ezekiel continues to give further details regarding the chronology of the Babylonian captivity. Ezekiel wrote: “in the five and twentieth year of our captivity... in the fourteenth year after that the city was smitten... the hand of the Lord was upon me...” (Ezekiel 40:1). Let us put this data in arithmetical form:

3630 year when city smitten in 3rd Babylonian incursion
+ 14
= 3644 14th year after the city was smitten was the 25th year of Ezekiel’s captivity in 3644

Now if we add those 25 years of Ezekiel’s captivity to the year when he was taken to Babylon we have:

3618 year when Ezekiel was taken captive
+ 25 years of Ezekiel captivity in Babylon
= 3643

Now the difference between the years 3643 and 3644 is because it was the beginning of the year 3644 when Ezekiel received the vision of the temple (Ezekiel 40:1), and the verse uses the word “after” meaning when the year had recently passed. But once again these chronological facts by Ezekiel affirm the accuracy and truthfulness of God’s chronology and more specifically the second and third Babylonian incursions climaxing with the desolation of Jerusalem.

Chart of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign and the Last Kings of Judah

KINGS OF JUDAH			KING OF BABYLON	
EVENT	JEHOIAKIM	ZEDEKIAH	NEBUCHADNEZZAR	TEXT
1ST BABYLONIAN INCURSION	4th Year Reign		1st Year Reign	Jeremiah 25:1
JERUSALEM UNDER SIEGE		10th Year Reign	18th Year Reign	Jeremiah 32:1-2
TEMPLE BURNED (3RD BABYLONIAN INCURSION)		11th Year Reign	19th Year Reign	Jeremiah 52:5 Jeremiah 52:12
70 YEARS OF THE DESOLATION OF JERUSALEM		11th Year Reign	19th Year Reign	2 Kings 25:2,7,8

BEGINS				
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How the Chronology was Preserved

In His wisdom, God deemed necessary that the historical facts regarding the Babylonian captivity for the people of Israel should be written by several prophets. God has always desired that His people strengthen their faith by a diligent search of the Scriptures; only there we will find the truth. As it is written:

“We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts” (2 Peter 1:19).

Remember that to safeguard the continuity of the ancient chronology, God linked the periods of the last kings of Israel with the reigning years of Nebuchadnezzar. That was because the monarchy of Israel was abolished by the Babylonian Empire. Had they not linked both monarchies’ periods, the biblical chronology would have been lost and we would be forced to depend on the sophisms of centers of paganism such as the Alexandrian library to give us the wrong facts about Biblical history.

In reviewing, two monarchical chronologies were matched. The first matching happened in 3612, in the 4th year of King Jehoiakim, which corresponds to the 1st year of King Nebuchadnezzar (Jeremiah 25:1) at the first Babylonian incursion. The second matching happened in 3617, one year before the second Babylonian Incursion; Jeremiah from prison purchased a property (Jeremiah 32:12,15); this purchase happened in the 10th year of the reign of King Zedekiah which corresponds to the 18th year of King Nebuchadnezzar (Jeremiah 32:1). Yet another matching happened at the 3rd Babylonian Incursion in 3630. This final incursion happened in the 11th year of King Zedekiah (Jeremiah 52:5; 2 Kings 25:2), which was the 19th year of King Nebuchadnezzar (Jeremiah 52:12; 2 Kings 25:8). In this year the temple was burned (Jeremiah 52:12, 13), and Jerusalem was left desolate.

The World Empires in Daniel’s Prophecy

In the year 3613, the 2nd year of King Nebuchadnezzar’s reign (Daniel 2:1); through a dream, the God of Israel revealed to Nebuchadnezzar a great portion of world history until the end of the world. In his dream Nebuchadnezzar saw a great image (Daniel 2:31) that was composed of four different metals: His head was pure gold, his breast and arms of silver, his belly and thighs of bronze (Daniel 2:32), his legs of iron, and its feet a mixture of iron and clay (Daniel 2:33). The image stood erect until a stone cut out of a mountain without hands smote it on its feet and broke it in pieces (Daniel 2:34). The whole image was destroyed and it crumbled to pieces, beginning with the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold (Daniel 2:35).

Through this dream God revealed to the Babylonian monarch that the world would be dominated by subsequent global empires. Each metal in the image represented a kingdom. God told Nebuchadnezzar that the image’s head represented his kingdom of Babylon, He said: “Thou art this head of gold” (Daniel 2:38). Nebuchadnezzar was not told what kingdoms the other metals represented, but just before the time of Babylon’s fall, that revelation was given to Daniel in Daniel 8:20-21.

It happened in the 1st year of King Belshazzar, two years before the fall of Babylon, in 3698 (Daniel 7:1), that Daniel received dreams and visions of four beasts depicting the four major world empires. He saw a lion with eagle's wings (Daniel 7:4), a bear which raised up itself on one side with three ribs in its mouth (Daniel 7:5), a leopard having four wings on its back and four heads (Daniel 7:6), and a dreadful beast with great iron teeth and ten horns (Daniel 7:7). From the ten horns proceeded a little horn, by whom three of the first horns were uprooted. This little horn had eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth speaking great things (Daniel 7:7).

God told Daniel: These four great beasts are four kingdoms, which shall arise out of the earth (Daniel 7:17). Of those four beasts three of them are clearly identified (Daniel 2:38; 8:20-21). Concerning Babylon, Daniel revealed to Nebuchadnezzar that he represented his kingdom by the statue's head of gold (Daniel 2:38) which is represented by the lion with eagles' wings. The kings of Media and Persia were represented not only by silver and by the bear but also by a ram (Daniel 7:5; Daniel 8:20). The kingdom of Greece was represented by the metal bronze, by the leopard and also by the goat and its horn was the first king (Daniel 8:21), (Alexander the Great). The fourth kingdom was the Roman Empire that conquered Greece. Imperial Rome was represented by the metal iron. It appears that it was for the purpose of protecting the prophecies that the name of the Roman Empire was not given at that time. But it is revealed later in the chronology of the mysteries of God.

Babylon's Fall: the Writing on the Wall

Babylon's kingdom was on the edge of a precipice, as it was about to fall under the dominion of Medo-Persia. In the year 3700, the third year of the Babylonian King Belshazzar, (Daniel 8:1), Daniel was given a vision of a ram with two horns which represented the kings of Media and Persia (Daniel 8:20), and the goat, which was the king of Greece (Daniel 8:21). With that vision Daniel was given the foreknowledge that Babylon was going to be conquered by the Medo-Persian Empire.

The third year of Belshazzar was also the last year of Belshazzar's life. It was in that year that Daniel was summoned to appear immediately before Belshazzar who was having a great feast in which he desecrated the vessels of the temple of God (Daniel 5:2). Then fingers of a man's hand appeared on the wall, which frightened Belshazzar extremely (Daniel 5:5). The writing was:

"MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN" (Daniel 5:25).

Daniel was a man of renown throughout the years of the Babylonian captivity; but Belshazzar, an arrogant man, did not acknowledge him. Even under great distress, Belshazzar addressed Daniel as a stranger when he asked: "Art thou that Daniel, which art of the children of the captivity of Judah, whom the king my father brought out of Jewry?" (Daniel 5:13). Then the king proceeded to offer Daniel luxurious gifts if he could read the writing on the wall (Daniel 5:16). Yet the prophet rejected the king's gifts because he had come not for the purpose of gain but to deliver God's message. Therefore, he went straight to the point, as he explained the writing:

"MENE: God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it" (Daniel 5:26).

"TEKEL: Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting" (Daniel 5:27).

“PERES: Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians” (Daniel 5:28)

On that fateful night Belshazzar ordered that Daniel be clothed with scarlet and appointed him to be the third ruler in the kingdom (Daniel 5:29). Although Daniel was bestowed with governmental authority in the Babylonian Empire, Belshazzar himself was killed on that very night (Daniel 5:30), and the Babylonian superpower came to an end as the armies of the Medians and Persians overthrew it.

Come Out of Babylon My People!

With the fall of Babylon also came the time to proclaim: “Flee out of the midst of Babylon, and deliver every man his soul: be not cut off in her iniquity” (Jeremiah 51:6). And again: “Babylon...that made all the earth drunken... Babylon is suddenly fallen and destroyed...” (Jeremiah 51:7, 8). The prophet had prophesied about Belshazzar when by the Word of the Lord he proclaimed: “I will punish Bel in Babylon, and I will bring forth out of his mouth that which he hath swallowed up” (Jeremiah 51:44). Remember that he had swallowed up wine using the vessels dedicated to the God of Heaven. By the fall of Babylon the time had come for the words spoken by the prophet to be rehearsed and obeyed: “My people, go ye out of the midst of her, and deliver every man his soul from the fierce anger of the Lord” (Jeremiah 51:45).

In the Medo-Persian Empire

When Babylon was conquered by the Medo-Persian Empire, Darius of the Medes took the kingdom. But the reign of the 62 year old monarch (Daniel 5:31) would not last long. God had preordained that the Persian king Cyrus would fulfill both Isaiah’s and Jeremiah’s prophecies. Therefore, Jeremiah prophesied about the internal transfer of power within the Medo-Persian Empire:

“And lest your heart faint, and ye fear for the rumour that shall be heard in the land; a rumour shall both come one year, and after that in another year shall come a rumour, and violence in the land, ruler against ruler” (Jeremiah 51:46).

Chapter 51 of Jeremiah presents the prophecy regarding the utter destruction and thorough desolation of Babylon. Now, what is this rumour that Jeremiah prophesied about in the above statement? Is it possible that the children of Israel would feel sorrow for the destruction of Babylon? Would Israel feel pity for the nation that destroyed their holy city Jerusalem and their temple? Would a rumor like that make the children of Israel faint and fear? Of course not; but they were also conscious of the prophecies given by Isaiah and Jeremiah regarding Cyrus who was to issue the decree to end the desolation of Jerusalem and command to lay the foundation of the second Jewish temple, as well as allowing their liberation from Babylonian captivity.

The rumor that would make Israel faint and fear would be the enthronement of a monarch who would not fulfill the prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah in favor of Israel. The rumour was that Darius the Mede, of whom nothing had been written in the prophecies, was taking over the kingdom of Babylon. Yet the monarch who should be in power to decree their liberation and the foundation of the temple was Cyrus

the Persian, not Darius the Mede. No wonder Daniel was so worried when in the first year of Darius he searched the prophecies, Daniel wrote:

“In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans. In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem” Daniel 9:1-2.

Daniel understood that the 70 years for the desolations of Jerusalem should be fulfilled in that year when Cyrus conquered Babylon but Darius took the kingdom. The rumor was that Darius’ reign would be short-lived and Cyrus would be enthroned instead. That was the violence of ruler against ruler from within the Medo-Persian Empire prophesied by Jeremiah (Jeremiah 51:46). Daniel knew that prophecy very well. But how would he reveal it to Darius? Because, after all, Darius had recently given him the presidency of the Medo-Persian Empire when he was appointed the first President in Darius’ kingdom (Daniel 6:2). Having all this knowledge, Daniel had to encourage Darius to accept God’s will about the monarchy in the Persian Empire (Daniel 11:2). Therefore, Daniel wrote: “Also I in the first year of Darius the Mede, even I, stood to confirm and to strengthen him” (Daniel 11:1).

Daniel’s faith was confirmed by Jeremiah’s prophecy. And having understood the writings of Jeremiah, he earnestly pleaded with God that the 70 years of Jerusalem’s desolation should not be prolonged because of their sin. The prophet then explains: “...I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God for the holy mountain of my God” (Daniel 9:20). Daniel also understood Jeremiah’s prophecy regarding the contention for power between Darius and Cyrus in the year 3700.

Daniel in Office Until the First Year of Cyrus, in 3700 A.M.

The Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar gave Daniel a very distinguished position in his empire and “made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon” (Daniel 2:48). When Babylon was conquered Daniel also served in the Kingdom of Medo-Persia. King Darius gave him the presidency of his reign (Daniel 6:1, 2). But also bear in mind that “Daniel continued even unto the first year of King Cyrus (Daniel 1:21). Why did Daniel continue until the first year of Cyrus the Persian? Because that year was unequivocally the first year of Darius the Mede, whose power only lasted a few months before Cyrus took over the kingdom; that is why the Word of God says: “So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian” (Daniel 6:28). Daniel served the Medo-Persian Empire in the reign of Darius and also in the reign of Cyrus which happened in the same year. Remember that this was the rumour prophesied by Jeremiah that “shall both come in one year” (Jeremiah 51:46); Cyrus would dethrone Darius in the very year when the prophecy for the 70 years of Jerusalem desolation should come to an end. This was the first year of both Darius and Cyrus reign in 3700.

Although Daniel had retired from political office, he continued his prophetic ministry even after the year 3700. Remember that in the third year of Cyrus Daniel was still receiving visions and messages from God (Daniel 10:1).

CHAPTER TEN

THE ANCIENT WORLD FROM 586 TO 400 B.C.

Introduction

Setting of This Period - This chapter deals with the period of the Exile and Restoration of the Jews, at the time of two world powers, one succeeding the other—the Neo-Babylonian and Persian empires. This period begins with the destruction of the kingdom of Judah and its capital city, Jerusalem, by the brutal war machine of Nebuchadnezzar. After this catastrophe we find the Jews in captivity in the Mesopotamian valley watching the signs which heralded the political weakening of their oppressors, and the rising of new powers in the east—the Medes first and the Persians a little later. When Nebuchadnezzar, the strong man of Babylon, died, three ephemeral rulers successively occupied his throne. This evidence of weakness was apparent to the watchful Jews, as was possibly also, during the next decade, the report of a new star on the horizon—Cyrus of Persia, whom Isaiah had described as their future liberator. How their hearts must have beat fast when reports of Cyrus' incredible successes reached them, the fall of Media and Ecbatana, then of Lydia with its impregnable capital, Sardis. Finally, they saw the strong new nation of the east put an end to the weak Babylonian Empire.

Cyrus, the new emperor, was a largehearted, humane monarch who fulfilled the Jewish expectations and prophecies in all details. He permitted the return of the Jews and the restoration of their Temple and its service. Arriving in their old homeland, the returned captives had to struggle against numerous odds, especially against the hostile attitude and activities of their neighbors. The rebuilding of the Temple was accomplished under great difficulties in approximately twenty years. After a series of crises—of which that described in Esther was the most serious—a semi-independent status within the Persian Empire was finally obtained in the time of Artaxerxes I, who sent Ezra to Judea with extraordinary powers, in 457 B.C. Ezra's work was hindered by the national enemies, but was finally brought to a successful completion by the strong leadership of Nehemiah. With the description of his work our Biblical sources become silent and the Intertestamental Period sets in.

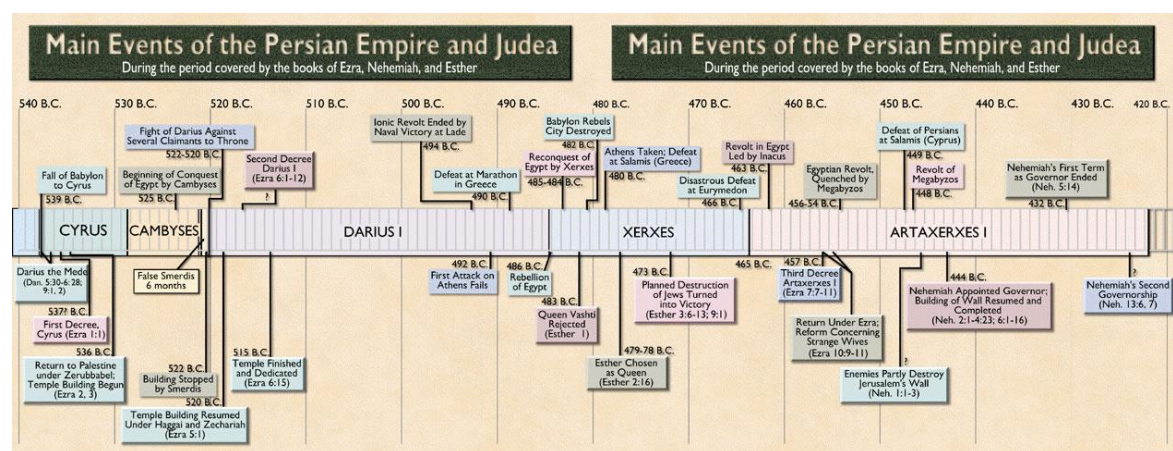
The Purpose of the Chapter - The purpose of this chapter is to give the history of the small Jewish nation against the historical background of its time. The history of the people of God cannot rightly be understood if one studies it as an isolated unit. The events are usually described but briefly in the Bible, and can fully be understood only if studied in the light of archeological and historical evidence.

The source material for this period of less than two centuries is very rich for some sections and extremely poor for others. The Bible is almost silent about any events lying between the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. and the return of the Jews about 50 years later. Even the historical books which inform us about the restoration of the nation (Ezra and Nehemiah) leave large gaps uncovered in their narratives.

This is also true of our extra-Biblical source material. It is very limited during the time of the Babylonian Empire, as well as during certain periods of the time of the Persians. Furthermore, this material is of great variety and differs in reliability. Official Babylonian and Persian documents are scarce. Our most voluminous sources, the Greek histories, are tainted with hatred against the Persians and are contradictory and frequently unreliable. Nevertheless for lack of something better they prove useful and important for the historian who seeks to reconstruct the story of the events of that period.

In recent years archeological discoveries have greatly added to our knowledge of this very important period in the history of God's people, and the following survey is based on the presently available evidence.

Main Events of the Persian Empire and Judea



Chronology of the Period - The chronology of this period is well established by means of some astronomical texts and a multitude of other dated documents. Since chronological problems are sufficiently examined in the section on chronology, we need not discuss them.

However, it should be said here that uncertainties concerning the accurate dates for certain events, as will be evident in several instances in this chapter, are not the result of uncertainties in the chronology of this period, but are due to fragmentary source material, or the ambiguous nature of their chronological data. Any clearly dated document of the period under discussion, be it Persian, Greek, Jewish, Egyptian, or otherwise, can easily be converted into the familiar B.C. scheme. But in many instances recorded events are not dated, or at least not exactly dated, in our Biblical and extra-Biblical sources. Such events must be put into the chronological scheme by a careful study of all factors involved. That in such cases scholarly conclusions vary, is understandable, and no date set down in this way can claim absolute accuracy; close approximation is all that can be reached.

The reader should therefore understand that where two dates are given, as, for example, for Cyrus' defeat of Astyages, our source material on which these dates are based allows two different interpretations. He should also bear in mind that a date given in this chapter, which differs from one found in another work dealing with the same subject, is not necessarily better or less accurate than the other. It may in some

instances be based on more recent evidence, in other cases on a different interpretation of evidence which allows more than one interpretation. While dates are necessary to understand history and cannot be dispensed with, the reader should always remember that many dates of ancient history are likely to be changed through the discovery of new evidence, and he should therefore not be surprised if certain dates herewith presented should later on prove to need correction.

Fortunately, the margin of possible error with regard to the dates of the period under discussion is very small and in no instance exceeds a few years. In most cases differences between the true dates and those given in this chapter will vary by not more than one year, and many dates presented are absolutely correct. In this regard the 6th and 5th centuries are founded chronologically on a more secure basis than several earlier or later periods of history.

The accompanying table presents the synchronisms between the different ruling houses of this period. The dates given for reigns of the kings of Egypt, Babylonia, and Persia (after 539 B.C.), as well as those given for the Jewish leaders, are exact, but those of the rulers of Media and Lydia are uncertain.

CHRONOLOGY OF THE ANCIENT WORLD FROM 586 TO 400 B.C.

EGYPT	BABYLONIA		MEDIA AND PERSIA		LYDIA	JUDEA
Amasis 570-526	Nebuchadnezzar	605-562	Cyaxares	*625-585	Alyattes *617-560	
	Evil-Merodach	562-560	Astyages	*585- 550	Croesus	
	(Amel-Marduk)				*560- 546	
	Nergal-shar-usur (Neriglissar)	560-556				
	Labashi-Marduk	556				
	Nabonidus	556-539	Cyrus (As ruler of Medes & Persians)	C. 553/2-530		
	Belshazzar (Coregent)	553?- 539	(As ruler of Babylon)	539-530		Zerubbabel 537-†
Psamtik III 526- 525			Cambyzes	530-522		

			Bardiya (Smerdis)	522		
			Darius I	522-486		
			Xerxes	486-465		
			Artaxerxes I	465-423		Ezra 457–† Nehemiah 444–†
			Darius II	423-405/4		
			Artaxerxes II	405/4-359/8		

* Uncertain dates.

† Only dates of appointment are available.

The Neo-Babylonian Empire From 586 to 539 B.C.

The history of the Neo-Babylonian Empire from its foundation by Nabopolassar during the 7th century B.C. until 586 B.C., the year in which the kingdom of Judah, with its capital, Jerusalem, was destroyed.

Nebuchadnezzar II (605-562 B.C.) - The great conqueror of Judah and destroyer of Jerusalem, Nebuchadnezzar directed his attention to more than warfare. He carried on extensive building operations. Of his accomplishments in this line the king was exceedingly proud, as his many building inscriptions reveal. Babylon was practically rebuilt by this king. He enlarged the city and surrounded it with new fortifications, enclosing at the same time a new palace which he had built more than one mile north of the old palace quarter. The great temple of Marduk, called Esagila, was beautified and its temple tower Etemenanki, which had been in ruins at the time when his father took the throne, was completed. Numerous other temples were rebuilt or newly erected in Babylon and elsewhere during Nebuchadnezzar's reign, which had more building activity than any other period in the history of Mesopotamia.

Little is known of Nebuchadnezzar's military activity after the Judean campaign, for there is nothing after his 11th year in the extant Babylonian chronicles, which recount many military campaigns of Nabopolassar and Nebuchadnezzar, and one of Nergal-shar-usur. However, there is information extant indicating that Nebuchadnezzar fought for 13 years against Tyre (585-573 B.C.). That proud maritime power, trusting in its impregnable island position, refused to bow to the Babylonian monarch, and therefore drew the wrath of Nebuchadnezzar upon itself. One year before Nebuchadnezzar's campaign against Tyre began, the prophet Ezekiel foretold the fate of the rich merchant city, which comprised large residential sections on the mainland, and warehouses, arsenals, factories, and shipyards located safely on a little rock island off the coast. Nebuchadnezzar's forces conquered and destroyed mainland Tyre, to

which Ezekiel's prophecies apply, but besieged the island in vain for many years. Tyre finally gave in and surrendered under the condition of retaining its king, although it had to accept a Babylonian high commissioner, who kept a watchful eye over Tyre's external and internal affairs and took care to safeguard Babylonia's interests.

During this period a campaign against unruly elements among Judah's former neighbors, Syria, Ammon, Moab, and also against Egypt, must have taken place, as Josephus claims, in the 23rd regnal year of Nebuchadnezzar (582 B.C.). Also Jews who had been left in the country after the debacle of 586 B.C. seem to have taken part in the anti-Babylonian activity, and this activity resulted in the punitive action of Nebuchadnezzar by which 745 more Jews were taken to Babylon as captives, according to Jeremiah 52:30.

Although the siege of Tyre had not been unsuccessful, the Chaldeans were disappointed, and considered the accomplishments not commensurate with the efforts of a 13 years' siege, as Ezekiel's words (chapter 29:18-20) reveal. The prophet, however, predicted that they would find rich booty in Egypt. Little is known of Nebuchadnezzar's Egyptian campaign foretold in this prophecy. One lone tablet fragment in the British Museum speaks of Nebuchadnezzar's war against Amasis of Egypt in the former king's 37th regnal year (568 B.C.). That we cannot expect to find Egyptian records concerning this war with its apparently disastrous results for Egypt is understandable, but it is unfortunate that neither are there Babylonian records extant that allow us to see how Ezekiel's prophecy was fulfilled. Since Amasis continued to reign over Egypt after this campaign, Nebuchadnezzar may have pardoned and reinstated him on the throne.

Of the great king's last seven years nothing is known from secular sources. The book of Daniel speaks of a seven years' madness of Nebuchadnezzar, which apparently was followed, probably shortly after his recovery, by his death (Daniel 4). Apparently, this is not recorded in contemporary records, which diligently hide deficiencies of their rulers.

Amel-Marduk, Nergal-shar-usur, and Labashi-Marduk (562-556 B.C.) - When Nebuchadnezzar, one of the most brilliant rulers of antiquity, died near the beginning of October, 562 B.C., after a reign of 43 years, his son Amel-Marduk, the Evil-Merodach of the Bible, ascended to the throne (562-560 B.C.)). The ancient historians know of him only as a man who led a wicked and unbridled life, but the Bible informs us that he pardoned Jehoiachin, the imprisoned king of the Jews, and bestowed royal honors upon him (Jeremiah 52:31-34), in the 37th year after he had been deported from Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar.

Amel-Marduk did not display the strength of his father, and after a reign of less than two years was murdered by revolutionaries, who put one of their own on the throne, Nergal-shar-usur (Greek: Neriglissar), who had not only been one of Nebuchadnezzar's most honored courtiers (Jeremiah 39:3, 13), but also his son-in-law, hence Amel-Marduk's brother-in-law. Nergal-shar-usur (560-556 B.C.) made an incursion into Cilicia in 557/56, recorded in the chronicle. He claimed to have built temples and palaces and to have destroyed enemies and burned to death his antagonists.

Since he came to the throne as a comparatively old man, he died after a short reign of less than four years. His son Labashi-Marduk succeeded him for probably less than two months, reigning for some time during the months of May and June, 556 B.C. Then a gang of conspirators tortured him to death and made Nabonidus, one of their own party, king of Babylon.

Nabonidus (556-539 B.C.) - The ancestry of the new ruler has not definitely been established, but it seems that his father had been a prince of Haran by the name of Nabû-balâtsu-iqbi, and his mother was probably Shumûa-damqa, a priestess of Sin (the moon-god), who, according to a monument thought to be erected in her honor, had held this office in the Sin temple of Haran since the time of Ashurbanipal. One opinion is that when Haran was conquered by the Medes and Babylonians in 610 B.C., she and her young son may have been carried captive to Babylon, and that she was taken into the harem of Nebuchadnezzar, rising there in the course of time from concubine to a favorite wife. Royal favors were also bestowed on her son Nabonidus, who became an influential officer in the administration of the empire, as we see from the fact that he was probably chosen in 585 B.C. by Nebuchadnezzar to act as mediator in the war between the Medes and Lydians. It is likely that he was married to one of Nebuchadnezzar's daughters and thus became the king's son-in-law, for which reason Daniel could call Nebuchadnezzar Belshazzar's father, meaning according to Hebrew usage "ancestor" or "grandfather" in this case (Daniel 5:11). The following genealogical sketch will show the relationship between the various rulers of the Neo-Babylonian Empire, who are numbered in sequence from Nabopolassar to Nabonidus.

At the time Nabonidus came to the throne a strong ruler was needed. The Medes had become bold under the preceding weak rulers of Babylonia, and had annexed the region of Haran. This was an act of aggression, which if unchecked could serve as an encouragement to further raids. Nabonidus, therefore, during his first regnal years considered it his first duty to reconquer Haran. By doing this he gave promise of becoming a strong and determined ruler. However, this expectation was not met, because the king seemed to have had too wide interests and too far-reaching plans. He was fond of the worship of the moon god Sin, and rebuilt the Sin temple of Haran, which had been in ruins since 610 B.C. He also erected sacred buildings in Ur, where he made his daughter priestess of Sin, was deeply interested in the ancient history of his nation, and dug up old records. Nevertheless, he seems to have recognized dangers that loomed to the east and took measures to meet them, among which is reckoned his campaign against Arabia, to be mentioned below.

In 553 B.C., while campaigning in eastern Palestine, he fell ill and went to the Lebanon to recuperate. He immediately summoned his son Belshazzar and entrusted the kingship to him, by which act he tried to guarantee the perpetuity of his royal house, and thus to make sure that no usurper would be put on the throne at Babylon during his absence. In this way he became free to carry out new plans of empire expansion. In the meantime, Belshazzar returned to Babylon and early in 552 (probably) ruled over the home provinces in the name of his father as coregent. This explains why, when he wanted to honor Daniel in a special way, he could offer him only the third place in the kingdom, the highest that it was in his power to give, since he himself occupied the second place (Daniel 5:16).

As soon as Nabonidus had recovered from his illness he began an invasion of north western Arabia and conquered the oasis of Tema, which was to become his residence for many years to come, and where he built large palaces. The real reason for this conquest is not known. Some historians have thought that Nabonidus went to Arabia in order to have a more secure capital in the event Mesopotamia were lost to the Iranian Medes and Persians, or because he was mentally ill and needed this place of seclusion. Whatever the reason may have been, Nabonidus stayed in Tema at least until his 11th regnal year, 545 B.C., and during this time carried out several successful raids against southern Arabian tribes.

In the meantime he had estranged himself completely from the leading elements of Babylonia, especially from the priests. His long absence from the capital caused the omission of several New Year feasts which ordinarily provided much lucrative revenue to the temples, and his favoritism for Sin resulted in a hostile Marduk priesthood. The administrative mismanagement of the domestic affairs by Belshazzar may have deepened the desire among many Babylonians to have a change of administration. The two rulers seem nevertheless to have had the reins of government so securely in their hands that no revolt was attempted. If it was attempted, we may reasonably conclude that it failed, since we have no records of it.

During the early years of Nabonidus' reign a new star arose in the eastern political sky, Cyrus, a vassal king of the Medes, known as the ruler of Persian tribes, and who called himself "king of Anshan." He rebelled against his Median lord Astyages and, after having taken the capital Ecbatana, deposed its king in 553 B.C. (or according to other sources in 550), about the time Nabonidus appointed Belshazzar as coregent. Danger from the eastern tribes was now felt to be more real than before, and when Croesus of Sardis, the king of Lydia, proposed an alliance to King Amasis of Egypt and to Nabonidus against the new eastern power, Nabonidus accepted gladly.

Following the maxim that an attack is the best defense, Croesus invaded Persian territory in 547 B.C., but misjudging his strength, lost capital and kingdom before his allies had time to organize and aid him against Cyrus.

The following years Cyrus consolidated his power in the empire which now reached from the Iranian plateau to the western coast of Asia Minor. When finally in 539 B.C., after further years of preparation, Cyrus felt the time had come to march against the weak empire of Nabonidus, there fell to him without any effort the rich eastern province of Gutium which bordered on Cyrus' territory and which formed the bulwark to the Median Wall built by Nebuchadnezzar to protect his empire against a possible invasion from the east. Nabonidus was naturally alarmed. Perhaps for his protection, or to deprive Cyrus of the help of local gods in the case of an invasion, he moved the statues of the various city gods to Babylon during the spring and summer of 539. Thus he increasingly embittered the local populations and priests, who felt that he was stealing their gods. His act also antagonized the priests of Babylon by increasing the religious competition in the capital, which was considered mainly the domain of the god Marduk.

When Cyrus was ready to march against Babylonia, Belshazzar had gathered his forces at Opis on the Tigris to meet the threat of invasion and to deny Cyrus a crossing of the river. In the ensuing battle the Babylonians suffered a disastrous defeat, and the Persians were able to push immediately through to Sippar on the Euphrates without finding any resistance. Cyrus captured this city without a fight on October 10, 539 B.C. Nabonidus himself fled in a southerly direction. Belshazzar returned to Babylon, about 35 miles south of Sippar, and trusting in its strong fortifications, remained in the city. It was here that, in a spirit of pride and arrogance and with a reckless feeling of security, he spent his last evening with his concubines and friends in frivolous drinking, using the sacred vessels of Solomon's Temple (Daniel 1:5). On October 12, Babylon fell to Cyrus' forces, who, according to Herodotus, had diverted the Euphrates, which normally flowed through the city, and marched in unopposed. Belshazzar was slain. Nabonidus, who had fled south, apparently found his roads of escape already barred, and therefore returned to Babylon and committed himself to the mercy of his victorious enemy. According to a Greek report, his life was spared by the generous Cyrus, and he was placed as vassal ruler over the distant land of Carmania.

The empire of the Chaldeans thus came to an inglorious end after an existence of less than one century. Founded by a strong ruler, Nabopolassar, and enlarged and consolidated by his equally strong son Nebuchadnezzar, the empire had quickly fallen to pieces after the latter's death under a succession of weak rulers. The Neo-Babylonian Empire had unfolded a glory in material wealth which had rarely, if ever, existed before. For this reason it is compared to a "head of gold" in the prophetic picture of Nebuchadnezzar's dream (Daniel 2:38). However, it had all the time possessed the following inherent weaknesses, which materially aided and accelerated its fall:

1. The Babylonian nation was aged and had been held subject for so many centuries by Amorites, Kassites, Assyrians, and now the Aramaean Chaldeans, that it lacked some of the character traits which make a nation politically strong and healthy.
2. There were no common interests and bonds that bound the different nations of the empire to the Chaldean dynasty, even the Babylonians themselves being ethnic strangers to the Chaldeans, who formed the ruling class only. When these weaknesses were compensated for by the strength of the ruler, as, for example, Nebuchadnezzar, the empire seemed strong and healthy. However, under a weak ruler like Nabonidus, who absented himself for many years from his capital, who was more interested in the antiquities of his country than in its present needs, and who favored a provincial deity more than the national patron god, besides committing other foolish acts and political blunders, the synthetic Babylonian Empire could not remain intact.

The Empire of the Medes

With the Medes, and the Persians who succeeded them, people of Indo-European stock appear on the scene of world history. The only other ethnically related nations that had played important roles in history before were the Hittites and the people of Mitanni, who had flourished in the second millennium of the pre-Christian era. The Medes and Persians lived in the highland that lies between Mesopotamia and India, a rough country that produced a hardy and morally healthy and strong nation of warriors who were accustomed to hardships and privations. They called themselves Arianu, "nobles," and their land Ariana, or Iran, a name it still bears.

The first Iranian tribes by the name of Medes appear as hard-fighting barbarians in the records of the Assyrian king Shalmaneser III in the middle of the 9th century B.C. Sargon II claims to have defeated and subjugated them in 715 B.C., mentioning Daiaukku as their ruler, a name Herodotus gives as Deikos (Deioces), to whom he attributes the founding of the Median kingdom, and whom he characterizes as a wise and righteous ruler. Deioces is also said to have caused the Median tribes to become a nation, and to have founded the capital Ecbatana. It is, however, difficult to identify the Deikos of Herodotus, who seems to have ruled from C. 700 to C. 647 B.C., with the Daiaukku of Sargon's records, and of course it is possible that two persons with the same name were involved.

Phraortes, the son of Deioces, ruled after his father's death for 22 years, from C. 647 to C. 625 B.C., and is credited with having subjugated the Persian tribes in the south. He lost his life fighting against Assyria.

Cyaxares, Phraortes' son, ruled over the Medes for 40 years, from C. 625 to C. 585 B.C. He became the ally of Nabopolassar of Babylon against Assyria, conquering Assur alone in 614, and Nineveh jointly

with the Babylonians in 612. The Babylonians absorbed the largest and most civilized part of the fallen Assyrian Empire, while the Medes seem to have been satisfied to inherit Assyria's northern and north eastern possessions. Cyaxares, who thus became the first great king of the Medes, is also credited by Herodotus with having defeated the Scythians, whose territory in Asia Minor then fell to him also.

During his last years, Cyaxares had to fight against the Lydians, who, under Alyattes, the king of Sardis, had become the third power of Asia, and who wanted to be the masters of Anatolia. In the sixth year of their war it happened that "in the midst of the battle day turned suddenly into night." Convinced that the displeasure of the gods rested upon them, the two warring nations became willing to conclude a peace treaty. This was accomplished with the help of some mediators among whom is mentioned Labynetus of Babylon, probably Nabonidus. The solar eclipse on May 28, 585 B.C. (said to have been predicted by Thales of Miletus), which was responsible for the end of the war between the Medes and Lydians, provides one of the few fixed dates for battles of antiquity. The treaty concluded with Alyattes gave Cyaxares all Anatolian territory east of the river Halys, and was strengthened by the marriage of Astyages, Cyaxares' son, to Aryanis, the daughter of Alyattes.

Astyages, who ruled for more than 30 years (Herodotus says 35), from C. 585 to either 553/2 or 550 B.C., was the last real monarch of the Median Empire. Hardly anything is known of his long reign. The ancient historians who mention him speak of him only so far as he played a role in the affairs of Cyrus, whose grandfather he was, according to Greek sources. He had given his daughter Mandane to Cambyses I, the vassal king of the Persians at Anshan, but when his daughter had given birth to a child he seems to have been hounded by fear that Cyrus would take the throne from him. How much truth there is in the Greek legends which tell of Astyages' attempts to kill his grandson, is unknown. It is certain, however, that his fears had not been unfounded, because Cyrus rose up against his overlord C. 553 B.C. Twice he was defeated by the forces of Astyages, but in the third encounter the Median army commander Harpagus betrayed his lord and turned his forces over to Cyrus. Not later than 550 B.C. Cyrus was in possession of the Median capital Ecbatana. Also Astyages had fallen into Cyrus' hands, but seems to have received kind treatment, if we can believe the Greeks, who claim that he became governor of Hyrcania, south of the Caspian Sea.

When Cyrus took over the Median Empire no great changes were apparent in the outward structure of the state, because the Medes and Persians were closely related tribes, as were also, by intermarriage, the two royal houses. Hence we find the empire referred to by historians of antiquity and in contemporary documents of different countries as that of "the Medes and Persians," or many times simply as that of "the Medes," although, after Astyages' fall they played only a minor role in the affairs of state. The transition from the Median to the Persian Empire was therefore really a transition of power from one royal house to another, and a transition of offices held by Median nobles to the Persian nobility. From that time on, Persian nobility occupied first places in the administration of the government, although influential Medes were still employed, and were found throughout the Persian period in many important offices.

The Persian Empire From Cyrus to Darius II

The Persian rulers of the empire period are called Achaemenid kings, since, with the exception of Darius III, all Persian monarchs claimed a certain Achaemenes as their ancestor. The inscriptions of Cyrus and

Darius I provide information concerning the genealogy of the two families to which these two kings belonged, and which stem from Achaemenes and Teispes as the following diagram shows:

The sequence of the ruling kings from Achaemenes to Cyrus II is not definitely known, but it seems that most or all of those listed in the above genealogy held the throne in Persia for some time. The two ruling houses reigned either over different Persian tribes simultaneously or the rulership shifted from one house to another several times. The capital seems to have been Anshan, since the early Persian kings call themselves regularly “kings of Anshan,” but its location has not definitely been established, although the proposal to identify it with Pasargadae in south western Iran seems to be the best made so far.

The only Persian ruler preceding Cyrus II mentioned in any extant contemporary records is Cyrus I. The inscriptions of the Assyrian king Ashurbanipal mention him as Kurash of Parsuash, who after hearing of the Assyrians’ victory over Elam, sent his son Arukku, probably a brother of Cambyses I, with heavy gifts to Nineveh in order to offer himself as vassal of the Assyrian emperor. This event took place shortly after 639 B.C., the year in which Elam was conquered, but apparently before king Phraortes of the Medes subjugated the Persians and made their land part of his empire.

Cyrus the Great, C. 553-530 B.C. - The Greek historians discuss at length the adventures of young Cyrus, but it is hard to separate truth from legend, and history from folklore. However, it seems credible that Cyrus’ mother, Mandane, was a daughter of Astyages, the last reigning monarch of Media, and that Cyrus himself had married Kasandane, the daughter of Astyages’ son Cyaxares. For reasons that are not clear to us, Cyrus rebelled against his overlord and grandfather father Astyages, probably in 553 B.C. Cyrus, whose forces were twice beaten by Astyages, was eventually successful when Harpagus, the Median commander, betrayed his master and king, and went over to Cyrus, who by 550 B.C. had Ecbatana, the Median capital, and its king in his hand.

Although Cyrus assumed the actual and effectual kingship of the empire, he seems to have treated the Medes with deference. Astyages was sent to Hyrcania as governor of a province, and his son Cyaxares II was, according to Xenophon, put on the throne as a figurehead. Contemporary records are completely silent about the existence of Cyaxares II, but it is not impossible that Cyrus allowed the Median crown prince, who was also his father-in-law, to occupy the throne jointly with him to please the Medes. If so, this Cyaxares may have been the same king mentioned repeatedly in the book of Daniel under the name Darius the Mede.

During the following years, Cyrus consolidated his power over his farflung empire, which reached from the borders of India in the east to the river Halys in central Asia Minor in the west. Our records tell us that he was engaged against hostile tribes east of the Tigris in 548 B.C., while preparing himself for the great test of strength that was soon to come. The comet like rise of Cyrus to the rulership of the second largest empire of its time did not fail to make an impression on his contemporaries. Subjugated people put their hope in him. The Jews, for example, whose prophecies designated a Koresh, or Cyrus, as their future liberator (Isaiah 44:28) must certainly have watched his rise to power with bated breath, as will be seen from the discussion in another section of this chapter. But political leaders like Nabonidus of Babylonia, Amasis of Egypt, and Croesus of Lydia viewed Cyrus’ emergence to power with grave misgivings, fearing for their own security and thrones. Hence, they banded themselves together by a treaty of mutual assistance.

That this fear had its valid reasons was demonstrated when Cyrus in the spring of 547 marched into the Upper Mesopotamian region lying between the river Khabur and the great bend of the Euphrates, to reoccupy a former Median province that Nabonidus had taken from the Medes. This was definitely an unfriendly act against the Babylonians, although it seems not to have resulted in any warlike actions between the forces of the two empires. Croesus, however, felt that something had to be done to meet the growing menace from the east, and being convinced that it is always advantageous to take the initiative, instead of waiting until the opponent takes it, the Lydian king crossed the Halys, and marched into Cyrus' territory. At Pteria, the first battle with the Persians was fought in late summer of 547, but ended in a draw. Yet, Croesus deemed it prudent to retreat to his strong capital, Sardis, and await the arrival of his allies before taking further actions against Cyrus. He seems to have believed that Cyrus had been sufficiently weakened in the battle at Pteria so that he was no longer an immediate threat to him, and definitely did not expect the Persians to advance to the west, far from their home base, in the autumn with the severe Anatolian winter at the door.

Geniuses like Cyrus sometimes act irrationally, and do what prudent men consider to be folly. Their actions are therefore frequently unpredictable. Cyrus was of this class. Instead of returning to his home base for the winter and coming back in full strength the following year, he pressed forward and unexpectedly arrived before Sardis with his army. That Croesus had completely miscalculated his opponent, can also clearly be seen from the fact that he had dismissed his mercenaries and allowed them to spend the winter in their home towns. Croesus, trusting in the bravery of the Lydians, and the irresistible strength of his cavalry, dared to attack Cyrus immediately after his arrival. However, the ingenuity of the Persian king was once more demonstrated, when Cyrus quickly had his baggage camels mounted by his cavalymen and thus awaited the attacking Lydians. The Lydian battle horses, accustomed neither to the appearance of those strange long-necked animals nor to their penetrating stench, shied away and turned back into the city. Very soon—between October and December, 547 B.C.—Sardis fell after a short siege, before the allies had an opportunity to come to Croesus' assistance. The Lydian king fell into the hands of Cyrus, who seems to have spared his opponent's life, although one source claims that Croesus was executed. Once more Cyrus had proved to the world that he was a man of destiny and surprises. Mixed were the feelings of his contemporaries when the news of his incredible victories reached the cities and villages of Babylonia. For the Jews in captivity this news must have sounded like sweet music, but the rulers in Babylon and Tema—Belshazzar and Nabonidus—must have been alarmed.

Nothing certain is known of Cyrus's activities during the six years that followed the conquest of Lydia. However, it is improbable that a man like Cyrus remained idle during those years. From Berossus, as quoted by Josephus, comes the report that Cyrus conquered all Asia before he marched against Babylon, and Xenophon knew of a campaign against Arabia during that time. Hence, we can conclude that Cyrus consolidated his control over the different parts of Asia Minor during the years of which contemporary sources are silent, and may also have encountered Nabonidus in Arabia, because this king claims in one text that he had personally "conquered his [Cyrus'] countries" and taken his possessions to his residence. It is uncertain whether this claim was a hollow boast, or whether Nabonidus had really defeated Cyrus at some time.

Whatever may have happened between the fall of Sardis (547) and 540 B.C., it is certain that by the end of 540 Cyrus had organized his empire into a well-knit unit and had built up a formidable army with which he was ready for the coming test of strength with Babylonia. Once more Cyrus' good fortune came

unexpectedly to his help when the governor of Babylonia's easternmost province, Gutium, turned his land and people over to the Persians. Nabonidus, who had returned from Tema to Babylon, may have assisted his son Belshazzar, the commander in chief of all eastern forces, in the preparations for the unavoidable clash with Cyrus.

The great and decisive battle between the two empire forces took place at Opis on the Tigris, at or near the site of the later city of Seleucia (about 20 miles downstream from modern Baghdad), and close to the great wall of Nebuchadnezzar. The reasons for the disastrous defeat that the Babylonian army suffered at Opis are unknown. Our cryptic records tell us only that Cyrus succeeded in crossing the river Tigris and that he defeated the Babylonian army so decisively that all organized resistance suddenly ceased to exist, and the whole country lay open to the Persians. The victors immediately grasped the opportunities that offered themselves and lost no time in gaining the greatest possible profit from their victory. They followed the fleeing Babylonians to the west and the south west, and were able to take Sippar, lying about 15 miles west of the Tigris, without battle on October 10, 539 B.C., and Babylon, which lay about 40 miles southwest of Opis, only two days later.

Nabonidus, who had been in Sippar just before the city fell, fled to the south, but for unknown reasons returned to Babylon a few days later and gave himself up to the Persians, who spared his life. After the battle of Opis, Belshazzar awaited his enemies behind the strong fortifications of Babylon. These, however, formed no protection for him. He seems to have had enemies inside Babylon who betrayed him and the city to the Persians. Thus "Ugbaru the governor of Gutium," who had, after the battle of Opis, marched directly toward Babylon, entered the city without a struggle on October 12, 539 B.C. (See NOTE) Belshazzar, who had engaged in a night of drunken revelry and had literally seen "the handwriting on the wall," was slain, but there seems to have been little bloodshed otherwise. Contrary to usual customs, the city was spared destruction by the Persians, and soldiers were placed as guards at the temples and public buildings to guarantee an orderly continuation of the daily life in Babylon, and to prevent any looting or destruction of property.

NOTE: Greek sources add this colorful detail regarding the capture of Babylon: Cyrus diverted the river Euphrates by opening the sluices upstream of Sippar, with the result that the water flowed into the marshes of Al Kift and Nejef. Thus the level of the river dropped low enough to enable the Persian soldiers to march into the city on the river bed. When they arrived at the wall of the Inner City they found unlocked the gates which opened into the streets that ended at the riverbank—perhaps left open by traitors inside the city. This story, though not corroborated by contemporary records, is not contradicted by the cuneiform inscriptions that deal with Babylon's fall. Those inscriptions state that the city was taken without a battle.

Cyrus by his leniency proved himself to be a successful conqueror, not only of kingdoms and cities but also of the hearts of men. When he, some 17 days later (October 29, 539 B.C.), personally entered the capital city, "all the inhabitants of Babylon ... kissed his feet, jubilant that he [had received] the kingship, and with shining faces. Happily they greeted him as a master through whose help they had come [again] to life from death [and] had all been spared damage and disaster, and they worshiped his [very] name".

Seldom had a great empire so easily been conquered, and even more seldom was a conqueror so readily accepted by those he had conquered as was Cyrus. The Chaldean ruling class, but especially Nabonidus, had alienated themselves so much from the Babylonians that they welcomed any change in government. The subjugated nations felt neither love nor loyalty toward their oppressors, but expected better days from the more humane rule of the Persians, who may have already given proof of their policies in those countries over which they had ruled for several years. Those policies had probably become known

throughout the civilized world. Their mildness and reasonableness had caused Cyrus to gain the hearts of the peoples with little other effort on his part.

Cyrus was not only a great war lord and general, but also a wise ruler, who knew how to win the peace as well as wars. In his peaceful measures he proved his real greatness. The Assyrians and Babylonians had destroyed the cities of conquered nations and transplanted their populations to other parts of their realm, but Cyrus did not wish to follow their example and to destroy peoples in order to rule over their graves. He spared conquered cities, returned peoples previously moved from their homesteads, and enriched their wealth by measures that favored them economically. The Babylonian capital is an example. By his making Babylon one of his capitals, by his favoring Marduk, the Babylonians' chief god, and later by his declaring himself "King of Babylon," he endeared himself to the people. He also became popular by returning to their cities the various deities that Nabonidus had moved to Babylon, and by repairing or rebuilding local temples, one of which was that of Jerusalem. By doing this he did a favor to the Babylonians, who had hated to see the many strange gods and worshipers in their city, and he pleased beyond measure the citizens of those foreign cities and countries whose gods were returned, or whose destroyed temples were rebuilt.

He acted wisely by allowing local leaders to reign over their own peoples as governors of provinces under Persian supervision, and by refraining from imposing on the conquered nations the Persian way of life, religion, or language. These wise policies initiated by Cyrus were followed in general by his successors, although some violated these principles occasionally. However, the Persians generally made an honest attempt to honor local customs, religions, and laws. They also made use of the almost universally understood Aramaic as the official language of the empire.

It was therefore a great loss when Cyrus, only eight years after the fall of Babylon, died in a campaign against some tribes in eastern Iran, in August, 530 B.C.

Cambyes, 530-522 B.C. - Cyrus had designated his son Cambyes as successor on the throne, as we learn from several records. However, unlike his father, he was not a popular ruler. Of this fact he was well aware. Because of this, before he left for Egypt, he had his brother Bardiya, or Smerdis, secretly killed, fearing that a long absence from the capital might be used by his enemies to put Smerdis on the throne. When this murder later became known and a false Smerdis, claiming to have survived the plot, usurped the throne, this usurper was accepted by great sections of the empire, a clear proof of Cambyes' unpopularity.

We know little more of Cambyes than his Egyptian campaign. The conquest of the Nile country was the goal of his passionate ambitions. Historians disagree in their opinions as to whether Cambyes by his Egyptian campaign carried out his father's plans, or whether he made a mistake his father would never have made. It is possible that Cyrus had planned eventually to conquer Egypt, whose king Amasis was the only surviving member of the former triple alliance formed by the ruling heads of Babylonia, Lydia, and Egypt against Persia. As he had wisely consolidated his rule in conquered areas after each victory before he attacked others, he may have wanted to carry out a thorough consolidation of his power throughout the former Babylonian Empire before turning against Egypt. But he died before revealing what his plans were.

It is, however, also possible that he had wisely refrained from overextending his commitments, while Cambyses, the son of a genius, may have felt that only new conquests could establish his name and fame.

When Cambyses marched against Egypt about the beginning of 525 B.C., Amasis had died and Psamtik III had come to the throne. Initially his campaign was unusually successful. He enjoyed the collaboration of the Phoenician cities, including Tyre, and the island of Cyprus, who put their navies at his disposal. Also Polycrates of Samos exchanged his alliance with Egypt for one with Persia. Phanes, a general of Egyptian mercenary forces, left Psamtik and went over to Cambyses, assisting him in his campaign against his former lord, especially by guiding the Persian army safely through the desert to the Delta. The first battle took place at Pelusium, where Psamtik's mercenary army suffered a grave defeat. Cambyses immediately advanced toward Memphis and took the city after a siege. He was also successful in capturing the Pharaoh, who had reigned for less than six months.

Libya and Cyrenaica submitted voluntarily to the Persians, but a campaign into the western desert failed because of tremendous losses. Another campaign against Ethiopia, the name which was given to Nubia, was successful, but also very costly. Thus, all Egypt and its dependencies were brought into the family of nations of which the Persian Empire was composed. To gain the good will of the Egyptians, Cambyses assumed the titles and performed the ceremonial functions of a Pharaoh. He organized Egypt into a strong satrapy, which remained securely in the hands of his deputies even during the years when the greatest part of the empire was in turmoil.

Herodotus describes certain cruelties against the Egyptians and insults to their gods, but his reports in this respect are certainly exaggerated. Some think that they reflect a change of policy after Cambyses' reverses. At least the Greek historian's narratives reveal the hatred the Egyptians felt against the conqueror. It is true that Cambyses destroyed certain Egyptian temples—perhaps those in which agitation against his regime was carried on—although there are also records that he favored certain temples and made grants to them. For example, he provided for the cleansing of the temple of Neith at Saïs and guaranteed the expenses for the festivals in honor of that goddess.

Cambyses left Egypt in 522 B.C. when he received word that a man claiming to be his brother Bardiya (Smerdis) had usurped the throne. The new claimant was widely recognized in the Persian home provinces, Babylonia, and elsewhere. While passing through Syria, Cambyses suddenly died, either by suicide or as the result of an accident. Since he left no heir, the false Smerdis' throne seemed to be established. However, his reign lasted only a little more than six months, until Darius, a distant relative of Cambyses, killed him and ascended the throne himself.

Darius I, 522-486 B.C. - Concerning the manner of Darius' accession to the throne we are well informed through that king's long inscription on the rock of Behistun, which served as a key for the decipherment of cuneiform scripts in the 19th century. Here, Darius records for posterity the account of how a Magian by the name of Gaumata had usurped the throne, and had made the people believe that he was Smerdis, the son of Cyrus, whom Cambyses had supposedly killed. He says further that Persia, Media, and the other countries had accepted him even before Cambyses' death, and that Smerdis destroyed certain unnamed sanctuaries, by doing which he apparently initiated a policy directed against the policies of his predecessors. One of the policies of the false Smerdis, during his short reign, was the destruction of temples. With such a king on the throne, it is not hard to see how the enemies of the Jews could stop the

rebuilding of the Temple of Jerusalem, which had been slowly proceeding ever since Cyrus had given the permission to build it.

Although Darius, with the help of some faithful supporters, succeeded in killing the false Smerdis, called Bardiya in Babylonian documents, and in gaining the throne for himself, thus bringing it back to the Achaemenid house, it took a long time and more fighting before he was finally recognized throughout the empire. He himself mentions 19 battles fought against opponents, and 9 kings captured, before he could feel secure in the possession of the throne. Among these opponents were two pretenders in Babylon, one rising up after the other, and both claiming to be sons of Nabonidus. The turmoil into which Persia was thrown after the false Smerdis' usurpation and Cambyse's death, lasted almost two years. But Darius finally emerged as the victor over all his enemies and undisputed ruler of the greatest empire the world had ever seen. That empire reached from the Indus in the east to the Hellespont in the west, and from Mt. Ararat in the north to Nubia in the south. After Darius had crushed all opposition to his rule he began a reign of peace that lasted for almost 30 years, and that gained him the well-deserved title, "the Great."

Manifold were his peaceful deeds that promoted welfare and happiness in the countries belonging to his empire. In Egypt, Darius had the canal finished between the Nile and the Red Sea, which Necho II had started to dig many years earlier. On the coastal road between Egypt and Palestine watering stations were built, and a very efficient postal system (for government dispatches) throughout the empire was organized with relay stations for horses and riders at regular intervals. The appointment of natives to responsible offices in the provincial administrations and of royal support of the religious practices and cults of subject nations gained for the king much good will. Numerous inscriptions from Egypt show how many temples Darius reopened or repaired in the Nile land and how he supported the Egyptian priesthood with rich gifts, so that he is called there "the friend of all gods." This benevolent attitude, known also from Greek records, with regard to sanctuaries and cults of his western provinces is furthermore evident in regard to the Jews. His friendly decree not only allowed them to finish the building of their Temple, but guaranteed them financial aid for their religious services (Ezra 6:6-12). Further, he allowed his subjects to live according to their own laws, as can be seen, for example, from his dealings with Egypt. He commanded that all Egypt's laws should be collected and published. Because of this the Egyptians called him their sixth lawgiver.

From all of his dealings with his subject nations a systematic effort is discernible to continue the policies of Cyrus and to create good will by a beneficent rule. The religious feelings of other nations were protected by him, their cults supported and encouraged, and their national peculiarities and customs wisely tolerated.

Darius was nevertheless a strong ruler who held his empire together with determination and prudence in true Oriental fashion. He formed the center of the empire and concentrated the glory and wealth of the nation in his palaces at Persepolis and Susa (Shushan). He had 15,000 people fed daily at his palace gates, and introduced a court ceremonial that had the purpose of instilling in his subjects an awe toward his person. Whoever approached him uninvited was liable to lose his life, and those who were allowed to appear before him had to throw themselves on the ground and keep their hands in their sleeves in the attitude of a helpless person. His will was law for all of his subjects, great and small. He chose his wives from the houses of the Persian nobles, and bound these nobles to his throne by giving to them in marriage his sons and daughters. The sons of noble Persians were educated at the palace and were his personal

pages. They were taught the national virtues, the speaking of truth, horse riding, hunting, and archery. From these men the highest officers of the realm were chosen. They remained the strongest supporters of the throne after they had spent their youth in the wealth and glory of the court life and had become personally attached to the person of the king.

Darius introduced also a uniform currency by means of a gold coin, called after his name dareikos (daric). Coins had been used by the Lydians since the 7th century B.C., but their use had been rather limited, mostly to the Greek-speaking nations. Now Darius adopted a similar system for the whole empire. The dareikos had the value of about 20 silver shekels, and its minting was a royal monopoly, but the coining of silver and bronze currency was left to the various provincial governments.

The proverbial honesty of the Persians was also a great blessing to the empire. Their religion required them to be truthful in their utterances, and to care for the welfare of the countries in which they lived. Hence, the Persians laid out beautiful parks, called by the Greeks paradeisoi (a Persian loan word; see further on Genesis 2:8), in many large cities and did much to protect forests and promote good agricultural practices and methods.

After Darius had reigned peacefully for about 20 years, he entered a decade politically clouded. Wars against the Greeks were fought with changing fortunes until the empire's defeat by the Hellenes. The seeds for these wars had been sown in Darius' first European expedition against the nomadic Scythians in 513 B.C. This expedition was undertaken to defeat these barbaric tribes in their motherland to prevent their continual raids on his possessions in Asia Minor. He occupied Thrace, lying between the Hellespont and Macedonia, with its Greek cities, then moved into Scythia, where the people desolated their own land and fled, but harassed Darius' army until he retreated. In 500 B.C., however, came the Ionian revolt led by Miletus. This revolt spread to many of the Greek cities over which Darius ruled. When Sardis, the center of the Persian administration in Asia Minor, was burned, Darius was furious, and swore never to forget or forgive the crime. It would lead too far a field to follow in this brief historical chapter the different phases of the Greek revolt and the Persian countermoves. Suffice it to say that the mighty city of Miletus, the center of the revolt, was destroyed in 494 B.C. and thus the burning of Sardis was avenged.

Darius, however, wanted also to punish the Athenians for their part in the uprising, and therefore started his wars against the Greek mainland. The first expedition in 492 B.C. failed because half of his fleet was destroyed by a storm at the promontory of Mt. Athos. Since Athens and Sparta continued to refuse subjection to Persian rule, a second expedition was sent out against Greece in 490 B.C., only to be disastrously defeated at Marathon. The loss of prestige the Persians thus suffered was greater than the loss in material or men, as can be seen from the fact that in 487 B.C., three years after the battle at Marathon, the Egyptians revolted and drove the Persians out of their country. Darius did not live to see the restoration of Persian rule in Egypt or the revenge of his defeat at Marathon. He died an aged and disillusioned man in November, 486 B.C. leaving the empire to his son Xerxes.

Xerxes, 486-465 B.C. - Darius had acceded to the desire of Atossa, the daughter of Cyrus, and appointed her son Xerxes as his successor, although he was not the eldest son. According to Herodotus, the new king was a handsome man who had no equal among the Persians in beauty or bodily strength. However, neither as military leader nor as monarch was he a worthy successor of Cyrus or Darius. He suffered grave defeats, but love adventures and harem intrigues seem to have interested him more than politics and

affairs of government. His character was unstable and vacillating but not basically bad. He was certainly not the ridiculous figure that the Greeks, who hated him, made him out to be.

Xerxes' first task after his accession to the throne was the suppression of the Egyptian revolt. In 485 B.C., he marched into Egypt and reconquered the land in a short campaign. Egypt, which had bravely but unsuccessfully defended its liberty, was brought into a much "harder servitude" than before the revolt and placed under the iron rule of Xerxes' brother Achaemenes. For nearly 25 years, no trouble arose for the Persians in the Nile country.

Probably in 482, only two years after the Egyptian revolt was crushed, two serious revolts broke out in Babylon. The first one was led by Bel-shimanni in August. After its breakdown a second revolt was led by Shamash-eriba in September of the same year. Xerxes commissioned his young son-in-law Megabyzos to quench these revolts with an iron hand. Babylon, which had been spared destruction by Cyrus because of its importance as the cultural center of the world of his time, was cruelly punished for its disloyalty. It was probably in this year that Xerxes had the city's fortifications destroyed, as well as its palaces and temples, including the glorious temple Esagila with its famous ziggurat (temple tower) Etemenanki. The golden statue of Marduk, whose hands every king, including the Persian monarchs, had grasped annually on the Babylonian New Year's Day, in order to be confirmed as "king of Babylon," was deported to Persia and the kingdom of Babylon combined with the province of Assyria. The proud title "king of Babylon" was never used again. Babylon, "the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency," was destroyed, never to be restored to its former glory, although it remained a city, still partly in ruins, until long after Alexander's day (see on Isaiah 13:19). The prophecies uttered more than two centuries earlier by Isaiah (chapter 13:19-22) were finally beginning to be fulfilled, and the proud nation received its reward for the pride, arrogance, and cruelty it had displayed in dealing with subjugated nations. The records of Nippur in Mesopotamia have revealed that a few years later much land was in the hands of Persians. This fact seems to indicate that Xerxes confiscated the estates of many wealthy Babylonians and handed them over to Persian nobles. That the Babylonian Jews also profited from these measures is equally evident from the cuneiform records and will be discussed later in this chapter.

In his wars with the Greeks, Xerxes was dogged by ill fortune. For a long time the king appeared to hesitate, seemingly undecided whether to continue the wars of his father against Greece or limit his rule to Asia. Herodotus tells how one faction of his counselors, led by his uncle Artabanus, was in favor of peace, while another one, whose champion was Mardonius, wanted war, and that the war party finally gained the king's support and preparations for a new expedition were made throughout the empire. Some think that his slowness was due to methodical preparation. The invasion of Greece started with the crossing of the Hellespont in 480 B.C. It would lead too far a field to describe the well-known third Greco-Persian war in this chapter, and follow the imperial forces to Artemisium and the Pass of Thermopylae, where the brave Greeks under Leonidas fought one of the most famous rear-guard actions of history. The Persians took Athens, which had been forsaken by the Athenians, but lost the naval battle at Salamis, and had to return as a defeated army.

More disastrous than the campaign of 480 B.C. was that of the following year (479 B.C.) when Xerxes' forces, led by Mardonius, suffered in one day a double defeat, at Plataea, in Greece, and at the promontory of Mycale on the coast of Asia Minor. The Persians left Greece and limited their rule henceforth to the Asian mainland, but even there the Greeks proved their superiority as soldiers, when,

under their leader Cimon, they defeated the Persians on the river Eurymedon in Pamphylia. On one day in 466 B.C., 14 years after their great defeats in Greece, the Persian army, navy, and 80 Phoenician auxiliary ships were destroyed. Concerning this battle a Greek poet could claim that “since the sea has separated Asia from Europe, and since the stormy Ares has ruled over men’s cities, no equal deed accomplished by humans has ever occurred on land or sea.”

Xerxes’ prestige must have suffered tremendously through the various catastrophes that the imperial forces experienced, but the king seems not to have been greatly disturbed about this situation. Yet, the serious debacle on the Eurymedon may have occasioned the plot against the king’s life, led by his mighty vizier Artabanus. Earlier plots, one of which is mentioned in the book of Esther (chapter 2:21-23), had been unsuccessful, but this last one succeeded, and Xerxes fell under the hands of murderers in a palace revolution.

Artaxerxes I, 465-423 B.C. - Artabanus, Xerxes’ confidant and powerful vizier, seems to have killed the king in the hope of ascending the throne himself. After having Xerxes put out of the way and thinking that he would easily control the younger prince Artaxerxes, whose weak character he well knew, he accused the crown prince Darius of having murdered his father. Artaxerxes believed the story and therefore gave Artabanus permission to kill Darius, but when he learned from his brother-in-law, Megabyzos, who the true murderer of his father was, he slew the mighty and dangerous courtier.

Like his father Xerxes, the new young ruler was no strong leader or general. If the crown had not possessed a strong supporter in the unselfish Megabyzos, Artaxerxes might not have kept the throne for very long. He lived in his palace cities most of the time, had his wars fought by his generals, was ruled by his mother and wife, and was usually undecided what policies he should follow. Since he was easily persuaded by influential counselors to do good or bad, his word could never be relied on. It was remarkable that the empire was held together so well during his reign.

The Persian debacle at the river Eurymedon in 465 B.C. and the murder of Xerxes in the same year were probably the reason for new uprisings in the north eastern and south western parts of the empire—Bactria and Egypt. The revolt in Bactria was not so serious and could easily be suppressed, but the situation was different in Egypt. A Libyan ruler, Inarus, son of a Psamtik, gained control of the Delta (463 or 462 B.C.) and made Mareia, an old border fortress in the north western Delta, his headquarters. A battle against the Persians took place at Papremis, in which the imperial forces were defeated and the satrap Achaemenes was slain. His body was sent to Persia by Inarus. However, the Persians were able to hold Memphis and Upper Egypt, and retained some connections with their homeland via the Wadi Hammamat in southern Egypt and the Red Sea.

The situation in which they were became more desperate, however, when the Athenians came to the aid of Inarus in 460 B.C. and took most of Memphis, pushing the remaining Persian garrison into the citadel. Preparations for an expedition against Inarus were made in Persia, but took a long time because of other, though lesser, troubles in different parts of the empire. In the meantime Artaxerxes tried to keep friendly those nations on whose help and good will a campaign against distant Egypt depended. To these belonged the Phoenicians, and various nations in Syria and Palestine, like the Jews. The concessions made to Ezra and the Jews in 457 B.C. may have been connected with this policy of befriending various nations at this time.

Finally, Megabyzos marched into Egypt in 456 B.C. The Egyptians and Athenians were beaten at Memphis and those who escaped from the debacle fled to the island of Prosopitis, where their situation soon became hopeless, since Megabyzos, aided by the Phoenician fleet, was in full control of the river. The defenders were nevertheless able to hold the island for a year and a half until it was stormed in the summer of 454 B.C. Inarus escaped to a fortress in the Delta, but finally surrendered to Megabyzos after the latter had guaranteed his life. The western Delta, however, remained in the hands of an Egyptian dynast, Amyrtaeus, who had belonged to Inarus' followers. It is not known what the Persians did against him or whether they succeeded in reconquering that section of Egypt. The reconquered portion of the country was placed under the prince Arsham (Arsames), a rich Persian who possessed large estates in Babylonia and elsewhere, and who ruled over the Nile country for almost half a century. A wealth of information about his administration is available in Aramaic, Babylonian, and Greek documents.

Inarus, trusting in the words of a Persian, had given himself up to Megabyzos, and was sent to Persia. A few years later, Artaxerxes' mother persuaded the king to have him killed in revenge for the death of Achaemenes. Megabyzos, who ruled over the large satrapy "Beyond the River," which covered all territories lying between the Euphrates and Egypt, was so indignant at this breach of faith that he broke with his royal brother-in-law, and revolted about 450 B.C. Two armies sent against him were beaten by the able general, and the situation in which Artaxerxes found himself became serious.

It was also during this time that the Persian fleet suffered a grave defeat in the naval battle against the Athenians, near Salamis, on Cyprus. Since the very existence of the empire seemed to be at stake, Artaxerxes, tired of the long and aimless war, made peace with the Greeks in 448 B.C. This peace of Cimon, as it is called, gave the Persians freedom from Athenian interference in Cyprus and Egypt, and freed the Greek cities on the coast of Asia Minor from the payment of tribute. Also, a compromise was reached between Artaxerxes and the mighty Megabyzos, since there seemed to be no chance of removing him by force. He was pardoned by the court and retained his high office as satrap of "Beyond the River." How all these serious events had their repercussions in the province of Judea, which lay in Megabyzos' satrapy, has already been indicated above, and will be discussed more in detail later in this chapter.

Little is known of the last 20 years of Artaxerxes' rule, in which the empire does not seem to have been seriously shaken by calamities of any consequence. The king remained a weak ruler and a despot who acted according to his moods—good or bad.

Darius II, 423-405/4 B.C. - When Artaxerxes died toward the end of his 41st regnal year, probably in February, 423, chaotic conditions prevailed once more. Xerxes, the eldest son, came to the throne as Xerxes II, but was killed after a few weeks by Secydianus, one of his half brothers, aided by some eunuchs. But the assassin could not keep the throne and was soon put out of the way by another half brother, Ochus, who became king as Darius II. Being a weakling, he was completely governed by Parysatis, who was his wife and sister, a woman of treacherous and cruel character. With some eunuchs she actually reigned over the empire and brought disgrace on it through a series of shameful, bloody crimes.

The result of these conditions was a contempt for royal authority throughout the kingdom and a series of revolts that plunged the government into one crises after another. One of these revolts should be mentioned. It was led by Arsites, a brother of the king, who was followed by the satrap of Syria,

Artyphius, a son of Megabyzos. Both of them, trusting the word of Parysatis and Darius, finally surrendered, but were perfidiously and cruelly put to death.

During his last two years Darius was troubled by sickness, unrest in Egypt, and a domestic quarrel about the succession to the throne after his impending departure. After Inarus' unsuccessful revolt Egypt had borne its humiliating position with resignation. But the obvious and increasing weakness of the Persian government and the continuous unrest throughout the empire caused Egyptian nationalists to take heart again and to rise up against their oppressors. The revolt came fully into the open at the time of Darius' death, with the proclamation of Amyrtaeus as king of Egypt. The movement of liberation started in the Delta and succeeded slowly. It was not until the turn of the century that all Egypt was wrested from the Persians, as we know from the Brooklyn Aramaic papyri (published in 1953), to be discussed later in this chapter.

With Darius II's death in 405 or 404 B.C. and the accession of his eldest son, Artaxerxes II, Persian history enters the period for which no Biblical records are available. Also, the Jewish documents from Egypt, to be discussed later in this chapter, become silent during the early years of Artaxerxes' reign; therefore this sketch of the Persian history ends here.

The Religion of the Persians - The original religion of the Persians was closely related to that common to all Aryan nations, like Mitanni of northern Mesopotamia in the 2nd millennium B.C., or Media and India of later times. The Aryans were polytheists and their main gods were deities of nature, the sky god, called by the Persians Ahura-Mazda, "wise lord" (the Indian Varuna, lord of heaven), Mithra the god of light and of treaties, Indra the old Aryan storm god, and the horse-driving twins, both named Nasatya. The priests of this popular religion were the Magi, descending, according to Herodotus, from an old Median tribe that had taken possession of the priesthood, and held a monopoly over all religious rites and sacrifices.

A great religious change was caused by Zarathustra (Zoroaster), the founder of a new Persian monotheistic religion. The time of his activity is unknown. Every century from the 11th to the 6th has been proposed as the age in which Zoroaster lived. It seems more plausible that he lived in the latter part of this period than in the earlier centuries, probably during Cyrus' reign or just before. One basis for this view is that Darius I, who was an ardent follower of the new religion, claims that Gaumata, the false Smerdis, who had belonged to the Magi, had destroyed temples which in the first place must have been Zoroastrian sanctuaries, and which were thorns in the flesh of the Magi. This statement of Darius I thus indicates that the new religion to which the Magi were hostile already existed in the time of Cambyses, and possessed sanctuaries for its religious services.

Zoroaster's one god is Ahura-Mazda (or Ormazd), "the wise lord," the main principle of everything good, the wise creator spirit, who reveals himself in light and fire. Pure spirits serve him as the Biblical angels serve God. The evil principle is embodied in Angra Mainyu, the chief of all demons, who adds evil to that which the god of light creates. Man is involved in this fight of the spiritual powers and has the task of leading the good principle to victory. Hence, the Zoroastrians appreciated purity and truth, and despised every kind of falsehood. By purity, Zoroaster understood health, life, strength, honesty, loyalty, agriculture, cattle breeding, protection of useful animals, and destruction of vermin, which were considered to be a creation of the evil one. Defilement was caused by laziness, dishonesty, or the touch of

a corpse. Zoroaster thus elevated the code of ethics of his people and educated the Iranian peasants to become the bearers of a high culture, which spread throughout the empire.

Whether Cyrus and Cambyses were still worshipers of the old Iranian gods of nature or already followers of Zoroaster is not definitely known, though it seems to be rather certain that they were strongly influenced by the new religion. The false Smerdis, a former Magian, must have belonged to the old religious clan, because Darius speaks of him in a contemptuous way for having destroyed sanctuaries, which Zoroastrians like Darius used as places of worship. Darius I, Xerxes, and Artaxerxes I were pure Zoroastrians, and the only god ever invoked in their Persian inscriptions is Ahura-Mazda.

Toward other religions, a great tolerance was shown, and concessions were readily made toward other people with regard to their religious customs and rites, although Zoroaster himself had rejected all other gods. This tolerance toward other religious groups shows that the Persian kings were wise rulers, who were anxious to create good will among their subjects belonging to many different ethnic and religious groups. The monotheism of the Jews seems to have been especially attractive to the Persians, for which reason great concessions were made to them. This is evidenced by the various royal decrees found in Ezra-Nehemiah, and by the Jewish documents that have come to light in Elephantine (Egypt).

When the Persian Empire passed its peak, a relaxation in the religious purity of the Persians becomes noticeable. Under Darius II, but especially under Artaxerxes II, many of the old national gods were reintroduced and received a place beside Ahura-Mazda. Also the fire, and haoma, an intoxicating drink forbidden by Zoroaster, were once more worshiped as divinities.

The Jews in Exile

After the Jews had been deported by Nebuchadnezzar in smaller and larger groups over a period of about a quarter of a century (Daniel 1:1-3; 2 Kings 24:16; 25:11; Jeremiah 52:28-30) the majority of the citizens of the former kingdom of Judah lived in exile in Babylonia. The nobility, intelligentsia, military, professionals, and many of the farmers had been taken captive and moved to Mesopotamia. They lived in cities and towns of which some are mentioned in the books of Daniel, Ezekiel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther (Babylon, Shushan, Tel-abib, Addon [Addan], Cherub, Immer, Casiphia, Tel-harsa, and Tel-melah), and also probably in rural districts.

During the early years of their exile a large number of the Jews may have been slaves and some may have had a hard life. Yet, the Babylonian laws made provision for a slave to earn his liberty in various ways, and the progressive Jews must have taken advantage of every opportunity that offered itself to regain their individual freedom. Ezekiel, who had been taken captive in 597 B.C., could speak six years later of "mine house" (Ezekiel 8:1), and the admonition of Jeremiah to the deported Jews to build houses and plant gardens in Babylonia (Jeremiah 29:5-7) would not have made sense if such had not been possible.

In the 37th year of the captivity of Jehoiachin (561 B.C.), he was released from prison by Amel-Marduk, Nebuchadnezzar's son, and apparently received honorable treatment from then on (2 Kings 25:27-30; Jeremiah 52:31-34). The very fact the Babylonians released Jehoiachin without fear of any unrest or anti-Babylonian agitation, reveals that the Jews must have gained the respect of their masters and been considered decent and respectable citizens. In the course of time some of the Jews came to honor and

office in the government, and others gained a place in the business and professional world. The books of Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther reveal how exiles penetrated every branch of government, and even occupied the highest offices in the life of the state. Jews were royal doorkeepers, cupbearers, provincial governors, and royal counselors (Esther 2:19; 10:3; Nehemiah 2:1; 5:14; etc.). Their rapid ascent in the social life of the empire may have caused the hatred they encountered in the time of Xerxes (described in Esther).

But the Bible is not the only source from which we learn of the social and material rise of the Jews in the land of their captivity. Documents discovered during the excavations of Nippur by the expedition of the University of Pennsylvania also provide light. The archives of a great banking firm in the city of Nippur, “Murashu Sons,” which consist of many thousands of clay tablets, allow us to look into the business life of this important city. Although these documents come from the time of Artaxerxes I and Darius II, hence actually from a period after the Exile, they provide valuable information from which conclusions in regard to earlier periods can be drawn. We find that among the clients of “Murashu Sons” were many Jews, who formed a wealthy and influential minority in Nippur and the surrounding country. They appear in these documents as tenants, as creditors with large sums of money, even as inspectors in the office of revenue, and administrative heads of districts. These documents from Nippur support data in Daniel or Ezra, where we read of Jews occupying important offices in Babylonia and Persia.

The Jews not only were progressive in a material way, but experienced also a spiritual change during the years of the Exile. The common misery, the national disaster, the loss of homeland, Temple, and freedom, caused the exiles to seek spiritual values, and to listen to religious leaders more than they had done in the old homeland. For example, the Jews abandoned idolatry after the Exile, a sin into which their fathers had periodically fallen, and which had been one of the main causes for the great catastrophes that struck them in the 7th and 6th centuries B.C. Men like Daniel and Ezekiel must have played influential roles as spiritual educators of the people. To them the Jewish leaders came for instruction from the Word of God (Ezekiel 8, 14, 20).

Many Jews undoubtedly studied the venerated books of their prophets, which they had brought to Babylonia from their homeland, and compared the inspired words of Isaiah and Jeremiah with the signs of the times. That this statement is true can be gathered from Daniel, who had learned “by books the number of the years” of the captivity of his people, mentioning as his source “Jeremiah” (Daniel 9:2). This text shows also that the faithful Bible-reading Jews believed in the fulfillment of these prophecies. They had witnessed the literal fulfillment of prophecies pronounced against tyrannical nations like Assyria, and had also seen incredible predictions about the doom of Jerusalem come true. Now, the faithful ones among the Jews waited to see the fulfillment of prophecies in regard to Babylon, in regard to the rise of a man by the name of Cyrus, and in regard to the restoration of their own nation. They read that their prophet Isaiah had predicted the rise of the Aryans more than a century before they played any role in history:

“Behold, I am stirring up the Medes against them [the Babylonians], who have no regard for silver and do not delight in gold” (Isaiah 13:17, RSV). Because of the weakness of Babylonia after Nebuchadnezzar’s death, the prophecies uttered by Isaiah (chapters 13, 14 and 21) and Jeremiah (chapter 50:2, 3, 10, 11) against Babylon must have gained a new meaning. During the early years of their captivity no one may have known from where the liberator described in Isaiah 44 and 45 might come, but when the reports reached the exiled Jews toward the middle of the 6th century B.C. that Cyrus, the hitherto unknown

prince of the Persian tribes of Iran, had overthrown the Median Empire, the Jews must have become keenly interested. Did not the Scriptures mention a man by the name of Cyrus?

“Thus says the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus,
whose right hand I have grasped,
to subdue nations before him
and ungird the loins of kings,
to open doors before him
that gates may not be closed:
‘I will go before you
and level the mountains,
I will break in pieces the doors of bronze
and cut asunder the bars of iron,
I will give you the treasures of darkness
and the hoards in secret places,
that you may know that it is I, the Lord,
the God of Israel, who call you by your name.
For the sake of my servant Jacob,
and Israel my chosen,
I call you by your name,
I surname you, though you do not know me’”(Isaiah 45:1-4, RSV).

These words could not be misunderstood. They clearly revealed from whom the Jews could expect their liberation, and named the man who would permit them to return to their homeland after the expiration of the 70-year captivity prophesied by Jeremiah (chs.25:11, 12; 29:10; see also Isaiah 44:28).

It is therefore not surprising that the people watched Cyrus’ comet like rise to power with bated breath. It must have been an exhilarating time for the enslaved and exiled nation, a time of tension, great hopes, and far-reaching expectations. It was also a time in which serious men like Daniel prayed more earnestly and searched themselves more thoroughly to remove every hidden sin from their lives, so God’s plans for His people might succeed (see Daniel 9).

Babylon fell to Cyrus’ forces without a pitched battle, and a man of the Jewish nation, Daniel, whose unselfish service under the Babylonians was known to the new rulers, received a highly influential position in the new administration (Daniel 6:3). Although many of his colleagues hated him, Daniel was able to hold his own, and succeeded in gaining Cyrus’ ear in regard to his people’s aspirations. When he made the new monarch acquainted with the prophecies of Isaiah, and Cyrus saw how clearly he had been described by an inspired pen more than a century before his birth, he must have come under the spell of such divine utterances. He willingly granted the request of Daniel to allow the Jews to return to their homeland and to rebuild their Temple, prefacing his decree with the significant admission, “The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house” (Ezra 1:2). This decree marked the end of the Jewish captivity.

The Restoration of the Jews

The Return and Temple Building Under Cyrus and Cambyses - The decree of Cyrus, which marked the beginning of a new period in the history of Jewry, was issued at Ecbatana in his first regnal year (Ezra 1:1). This, if reckoned from the fall of the Babylonian Empire according to the Jewish method, from autumn to autumn, could be in the summer of 537 B.C.

The decree was issued in two forms. One was to be publicly proclaimed (2 Chronicles 36:23; Ezra 1:2-4). The second one was rather a document of directives for official use only. The public decree provided for (1) the rebuilding of the Temple at Jerusalem, (2) the return of all captive Hebrews to Judea on a voluntary basis, and (3) the contribution of financial assistance to the returning Jews by their compatriots who chose to remain behind, as well as by their Gentile friends. The official decree, on the other hand, (1) contained directives and exact specifications concerning the planned new Temple, (2) made provisions for the covering of the building expenses by royal funds, and (3) gave a command to return to the Jews the available vessels of the former Temple (Ezra 6:3-5). There was a reason why the contents of the decree that was not publicly announced were not included in the public one. Some of the provisions were not important for the public; also, an announcement of the fact that the king was willing to bear the expenses might have discouraged the making of financial offerings by the Jews and their friends.

Cyrus also appointed a Jew of royal blood, named Sheshbazzar or Zerubbabel, to be the governor of the province of Judea, which was part of the satrapy "Beyond the River," that great division of the empire that comprised all lands lying between the river Euphrates and Egypt. To this new governor were given all the vessels of the old Jerusalem Temple that were found in Babylon. In conjunction with Jeshua (or Joshua), a descendant of the last officiating high priest of the Solomonic Temple, and 9 or 10 other leading men (Ezra 2:2; Nehemiah 7:7), Zerubbabel made all preparations for the return to the old homeland. More than 42,000 exiles entered in the official list gave answer to the call of Cyrus and were willing to return to Judea.

The detailed list given in Ezra 2 reveals that most Jews had been able to save their genealogical documents throughout their captivity and thus could prove their rights and titles in their homeland. The returning non-ecclesiastical exiles are classified in 17 family units numbering from about 100 to almost 3,000 men each, and 15 groups were listed according to town units, of which the smallest numbered 42 men and the largest 1,254. Besides these there was one group called "the children of Senaah," 3,630 men, which may have consisted of poor people (see on Ezra 2:35), and 652 men who had lost all their documents by which they could have proved their rights in the Jewish congregation. Of the ecclesiastical exiles, more than 4,000 priests belonging to 4 families joined Zerubbabel, and also an unknown number of priests belonging to 3 families who could not prove their rights to the priesthood. In contrast to the great number of priests (4,389) it is significant that only a small number of lower Temple personnel (733) were willing to return. The reason for this reluctance may have lain in the fact that Ezekiel had predicted that the Levites would be degraded in the future Temple service to comparatively low manual work because of their apostasy in the pre-exilic period (Ezekiel 44:9-16). Furthermore, we find the returning Jews accompanied by about 7,500 servants and singers (Ezra 2:64, 65).

If the decree of Cyrus was issued in the summer or autumn of 537 B.C., the journey was probably started in the spring of the following year, 536 B.C., since this was the usual season for traveling. The Mesopotamian armies had customarily left their homeland for foreign campaigns in the spring. Ezra

started his return journey, some 80 years later, in the spring, arriving at Jerusalem about 3¹/₂ months after his departure from Babylonia. The large caravan of Zerubbabel's followers, about 50,000 individuals who had some 8,000 beasts of burden carrying their possessions, must have needed at least as much time as Ezra to reach Jerusalem, and probably arrived in their homeland during the summer. Like all large armies they either followed the course of the Euphrates until they reached approximately the 36th parallel, or went through the former homeland of Assyria to Arbela and followed the approximate course of the present Syro-Turkish border. From there they must have crossed the north Syrian desert for almost 100 miles to the river Orontes, with the oasis of Aleppo lying in the midst of this thirsty land. After they reached the Orontes, they could have used either the inland road or that which followed the coast of Phoenicia and Palestine. If they used the first they followed the Orontes River to its source, then continuing in a southerly direction through the highland lying between the Lebanon mountain range and the Antilebanon (including Mt. Hermon and Mt. Amana), finally crossing Galilee and Samaria before they reached their destination.

After reaching Jerusalem, they first had a service of gratitude in which a large offering was made by the leading men of the congregation. The returned exiles then dispersed to reoccupy the lands of their ancestors. At the beginning of the New Year, they gathered at Jerusalem for the dedication of a newly erected altar of burnt offering, the commencement of the daily sacrificial service, and the celebration of the feasts of the 7th month. At that time plans were also laid for the rebuilding of the Temple and contracts were concluded with the Sidonians and Tyrians for the necessary lumber, and with masons and carpenters for the planned work (Ezra 2:68 to 3:7).

The actual work of rebuilding the Temple was not begun until the following year. For the laying of the foundation stone the same month was chosen in which Solomon had started to build the first Temple (Ezra 3:8; 1 Kings 6:1). This was an occasion of great joy for the faithful Jews who had waited many years for this day. However, the plans showed that the new Temple with its auxiliary buildings would not match in size and splendor those that Nebuchadnezzar had destroyed, for which reason some of the older men who in their youth had seen Solomon's Temple, wept (Ezra 3:8-13).

After the work on the Temple had started, trouble began with the Samaritans. They were a fusion of several nationalities that were brought into the country of the former kingdom of Israel at various times by different Assyrian kings from several conquered areas of the former Assyrian Empire. They served their own pagan gods, together with Jehovah, whose worship they had added to their pagan worship when they came to Palestine (see 2 Kings 17:24-33). They were doubtless already hostile, for when the Jews returned from Babylon they reclaimed their ancestral possessions, some of which probably had been occupied by the Samaritans during the years of Judah's captivity. The Samaritans were not only expelled from those lands, but were denied any participation in the rebuilding of the Temple or any rights in the service at Jerusalem. The returning Jews had learned the hard lesson that close association with those who worship idols leads to idolatry, and it was idolatry that caused the catastrophe of 586 B.C. When the zealous Jews thus showed that they had learned their lesson during the years of captivity in Babylon and firmly announced to their northern neighbors that they would have nothing to do with them, a break came that was never healed (Ezra 4:1-3).

The result of this decision was an active hostility on the part of the Samaritans. They "weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building" (Ezra 4:4). Another reason for the

slackening of the building activity at the Temple was that the Samaritans hired “counsellors against them” (Ezra 4:5), who apparently succeeded in preventing the payments of the promised royal funds. After the death of Daniel, there may have been no Jewish sponsor at the court to further their cause and defend their interests in hours of crisis. The threats that Darius connected with the renewal of Cyrus’ decree and its financial provisions in case it was not carried out, seem to indicate that he had discovered that Cyrus’ decree had been thwarted (Ezra 6:8-12).

The Jews, on the other hand, had not shown enough faith to meet their disappointments with fortitude. Instead of offering to the enemy a united and determined front, they tried individually to defend themselves as well as they could, built solid houses for themselves, and left the work at Jerusalem undone. This lack of faith in God’s cause resulted in divine punishments such as inflation, drought, and bad harvests (Haggai 1:6, 11). Some work, however, seems to have been done at the Temple site throughout the reigns of Cyrus and Cambyses, as we learn from the words of the Jews who declared, during Darius’ reign, that since the “time [of Cyrus] even until now hath it been in building, and yet it is not finished” (Ezra 5:16).

When Cambyses crossed Palestine on his way to Egypt in 525 B.C., representatives of the Jews may have met him somewhere in one of the coastal towns to assure him of their continued loyalty. There is no evidence, but the Jewish documents of Elephantine in Egypt indicate that Cambyses was more favorably disposed toward the Jews than to the Egyptians, as can be learned from the fact that he destroyed the Egyptian temple on Elephantine, but left the neighboring Jewish temple on the same island unmolested. Hence, we are justified in concluding that he did nothing hostile to the Jews in their homeland. Any frustration they experienced in their work must have come from lower officials, and their Palestinian neighbors, who may have felt that the hostile activity against the Jews would remain unpunished, since the king was far away engaged in military campaigns. These enemies of the Jews were also aware of the great unpopularity of Cambyses throughout the empire and knew how to use these antiroyal feelings to their advantage, as we shall see in discussing the next phase of history, the interruption of all Jewish building under the usurper, Smerdis.

The Interruption of the Temple Building Under Smerdis - Cambyses’ unpopularity was so great that when the Median Gaumata, on March 11, 522 B.C., proclaimed himself king, on the claim that he was Bardiya, or Smerdis, the brother of Cambyses, he was immediately accepted by the inhabitants of a great part of the empire. The proof of this is found in Babylonian documents dated before the death of Cambyses in the reign of Bardiya, as the false Smerdis was called in Babylonia. Until his death on September 29 of the same year the false Bardiya, a follower of the old pre-Zoroastrian religion, evidently made vigorous attempts to stamp out the new religion. He had temples destroyed (presumably Zoroastrian), as Darius charged in his long Behistun inscription.

It is not difficult to understand how elements hostile toward the Jews could easily secure from the impostor a decree prohibiting the continuation of the building of the Temple at Jerusalem, and perhaps even permitting the destruction of what had already been built. Such a decree would be in harmony with Smerdis’ policy of destroying temples, probably with the purpose of stamping out all religions that were a threat to the religion he advocated. His action against the Jews may also have been motivated by the fact that they had received favors from the preceding Persian kings whose work he wished to wreck.

The enemies of the Jews would undoubtedly be delighted with such a decree, and would use it as their authority for an attack upon what had already been built. This can be concluded from the fact that it was necessary to lay a new foundation (Haggai 2:18, 19) when the rebuilding of the Temple was begun again two years later. The official archives seem to have been destroyed during the attack on Jerusalem, for the Jews were not able to produce any documentary evidence to justify their building activity when Tatnai, the governor of "Across the River," a few years later made an investigation. Reference had to be made to the royal files in Babylonia for corroboration of their verbal claims (Ezra 5:13 to 6:2).

The six months of the reign of Smerdis and the succeeding months in which Darius had to fight for the throne against several pretenders, until stable political conditions returned to the empire, must have been anxious times for the Jews. The conditions described by the prophets Haggai and Zechariah allow us to understand some of the calamities that preceded the ministry of those men, whose work started in the second year of Darius (520/19 B.C.). For the Jews it must have been a great relief when they saw that Darius, a Zoroastrian who could be expected to be their friend as Cyrus and Cambyses had been, became master of the difficult political situation and was firmly settled on the throne of the Achaemenid empire.

Resumption and Completion of the Temple Building Under Darius I - When orderly conditions had returned to the empire, two men, the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, were raised up by God to initiate a new drive for a resumption of the interrupted work on the Temple. The first chapter of Haggai begins with a prophetic message to Zerubbabel and Jeshua, the secular and spiritual leaders of the people, on the 1st of the 6th month (Elul) of the 2nd year of Darius. Haggai appealed for a new start in building the Temple, rebuking the people at the same time for their lack of faith and zeal, and pointing out that calamities they experienced were the result of their slackness Haggai 1:2-11. Several weeks later (on the 24th of the same month) the leaders and the people decided to heed the admonition (Haggai 1:12-15). These two dates of Haggai are generally considered to be August 29 and September 21, 520 B.C., by a spring-to-spring reckoning of the year. Haggai addressed the people and their leaders on the 21st of the 7th month, toward the end of the Feast of Tabernacles, approximately October 17, 520 B.C. This time he had no words of rebuke, but told them to be of good courage. He assured them that the glory of this new Temple, which seemed insignificant in comparison with Solomon's, would actually surpass it (Haggai 2:3-9). He thus prophesied of the work of Jesus Christ that would be accomplished in this Temple. Several weeks later, in the 8th month, Zechariah, a prophet of apocalyptic visions, joined Haggai (Zechariah 1:1 ff.)

On December 18, 520 B.C., sufficient preliminary work on the site had been done so that a new foundation stone could be laid. Such a day was always connected with special festivities, and Haggai used this opportunity to deliver two speeches, one probably in the morning, the other in the afternoon. In his first address he assured the people that God would bless them from this day on as a reward for their renewed zeal. He challenged them to mark this date of the laying of the foundation stone and to see whether God would keep His promises and bring a change in their distressing political and economic situation (Haggai 2:15-19). The second speech contained further promises of what God was planning to do for His people. These promises were conditional (Haggai 2:20-23).

There was apparently no more interference from enemies, who would not dare now to enforce any hostile decree that the false Smerdis might have issued. Darius would interpret such an act as being directed against his administration.

Suddenly came “Tatnai, governor on this side of the river” (the province called “Beyond the River” from the Mesopotamian point of view), with his whole staff of officers, to Jerusalem (Ezra 5:3), probably on a routine tour of inspection. Since it had been known for a long time that the satrap of the territories of “Beyond the River” and “Babylonia” during the early years of Darius was Ushtani, it was thought that Tatnai must have been an Aramaic form of his Persian name. However, a recently published cuneiform tablet from Babylon has revealed that this interpretation is incorrect, and that Tatnai was Ushtani’s subordinate in the administration of “Beyond the River,” since Ushtani could not effectively administer two large provinces personally.

Tatnai showed himself to be an impartial and conscientious official in the best Persian tradition. Seeing the industrious building activities at the Temple site, he naturally asked for the royal permit. The elders of the Jews replied—while Zerubbabel as governor wisely kept himself in the background, since he could not know the attitude of the new official. They told the story of the destruction of the first Temple by Nebuchadnezzar, their long captivity in Babylonia, and their return under Cyrus, mentioning also that he had given back to them the Temple treasures, and issued a decree permitting the rebuilding of the Temple. Tatnai was favorably impressed by the sincerity of the Jews and evidently believed their story, for he allowed them to continue their work for the time being. However, since they had been unable to produce an official written permit as proof of their claims—the permit had probably been destroyed or stolen by the Samaritans—he sent to the king a report of the whole case. To this he appended the names of the Jewish leaders, requesting an investigation in the archives of Babylon, and a royal decision concerning his attitude toward the Jews (Ezra 5:3-17).

After the receipt of Tatnai’s report the government files of Babylon were searched. Once more, the Persian conscientiousness became apparent when the officials charged with the investigation extended their search to Ecbatana after the archives of Babylon failed to produce any documents on the case. Finally, the official copy of Cyrus’ decree was found and taken to the king. The question must then have arisen as to how much money had been spent on the Jerusalem Temple since the issuance of the decree, for it provided for payment of the building expenses from royal funds. When an investigation revealed that little or nothing had ever been paid, Darius must have been angry, for such failure showed how certain royal decrees were sidetracked and their provisions not carried out. This must have been the reason that his reply to Tatnai was composed in an unusually sharp tone, and that it contained threats of terrible punishments if his new decree were not carried out. This new edict demanded, first, that Tatnai refrain from any interference with the work of the Jews; second, that the expenses promised by Cyrus be now paid from the revenue of the province of “Beyond the River”; and third, that the Jews, in their religious services, should pray for the well-being of the king and his sons (Ezra 6:1-12).

With the material support of the government and the spiritual support of their leaders and the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, the people seem to have worked with great zeal and joy. The whole project was finished by the 3rd of Adar in the 6th year of Darius, when the dedication ceremonies were held (Ezra 6:13-15). This was, by either spring or fall reckoning, March 12, 515 B.C. The actual interval from the laying of the second foundation in December, 520 B.C., was 4 years and 3 months. This was 2 years and 3 months less than Solomon had needed to complete the building of his Temple compound. The reason for the shorter building period lay undoubtedly in the fact that part of the tremendous substructures that Solomon had built to provide a wide platform on the uneven terrain of the north eastern hill of Jerusalem

were still usable, and that much building material, procured under the reigns of Cyrus and Cambyses, was available.

After the description of the festivities connected with the dedication of the new Temple and the celebration of the Feast of Unleavened Bread in the following month (Ezra 6:16-22,), the Biblical records become silent until the time of Xerxes. Yet, it can be taken for granted that the Jews prospered during the reign of Darius, whose rule was beneficial for all parts of the empire, as we know from the extant records of several countries.

Critical Times in Xerxes' Reign - The book of Esther describes a crisis that developed in the 12th year of Xerxes. A brief summary here is sufficient. The personal hatred of Haman, a high counselor of the king, against Mordecai, a Jewish gate official employed in the palace at Susa (Biblical Shushan), resulted in the plan to destroy the whole Jewish nation. The king, whose unstable and undisciplined character is well known from the descriptions of ancient secular historians, granted Haman's request as a personal favor to him without investigating the reasons for it. Providence, however, had already made provision for the Jews' deliverance by having allowed the beautiful Jewish girl Esther to become Xerxes' wife in 479/78 B.C. Through the prayers of the entire Jewish nation, and Esther's personal intervention with the king, the previously given decree to kill all Jews on a certain day in March, 473 B.C., was not carried out. Although the decree could not be revoked, owing to a peculiar Persian custom, an additional royal edict allowed the Jews to defend themselves, and the day on which they would have been massacred became a day of great deliverance. Mordecai, who had received Haman's office after the latter's execution for his treachery, is credited with having done much to benefit his people (Esther 10:3). A cuneiform tablet in the Berlin Museum mentions Mordecai as an influential official at Susa in the time of Xerxes. Thus the story of Esther, frequently considered as fiction, receives valuable archeological support.

Interesting light is shed on the events described in the book of Esther by the cuneiform documents of the business house of Murashu Sons at Nippur, which come from the next two reigns after Xerxes—those of Artaxerxes I and Darius II. They reveal that the Jews formed an influential and wealthy minority in the city of Nippur and the rural areas belonging to it. Jews appear as partners in transactions in which large sums of money are involved, as administrators of districts, and as rich money lenders. All this evidence reveals that the Jews had gone through a period in which they had enjoyed certain favors, as happened under Mordecai's leadership.

When this man had become "great among the Jews, and accepted of the multitude of his brethren" in the Persian Empire (Esther 10:3), his name became a household word in Jewish circles, and many parents gave their children the name Mordecai. The documents of Murashu Sons from Artaxerxes I's time contain 61 personal names of Jews. It is extremely interesting to see that although 60 different persons are represented by these 61 name references, 6 different Jews bore the name Mordecai. All of them, apparently, were born shortly after the events recorded in the book of Esther had taken place. A little later, the name fell into disuse again, as is seen from the fact that among the 46 names of Jews mentioned in the documents of the same firm from the time of Darius II the name Mordecai does not appear.

Return Under Artaxerxes I and the Work of Ezra - Between the last dated events of the book of Esther (spring, 473 B.C.) and the next recorded happening of the book of Ezra (spring, 457 B.C.) lay 16 years, concerning which there are no known records that can throw any direct light on the history of the Jewish nation. Xerxes had in the meantime been murdered, and his son Artaxerxes had come to the throne.

The empire lived under the cloud of the grave defeat at the Eurymedon, to which soon was added the loss of Egypt through the rebellion of Inarus in 463 or 462 B.C. Since it was important that Judea, lying on the road to Egypt, remain loyal and friendly toward the Persian administration, especially when the campaign against Egypt would get under way (in 456 B.C.), Artaxerxes lent a willing ear to the petitions of Ezra (chapter 7:28), whose title indicates that he was “referee of Jewish affairs” in the chancellery (see on Ezra 7:12). He petitioned the king to grant the Jews a greater measure of self-government than they had possessed hitherto, and to allow the reintroduction of the Mosaic law as the law of the land in the province of Judea.

By royal decree Artaxerxes appointed Ezra to return to Judea with far-reaching authority, and called on all Jews who desired to return to their old homeland to do so. The decree further commissioned Ezra to reorganize the whole judicial system in Judea, and to install judges and magistrates with power over life and death, who should use “the law of the God of heaven” as the basis of their work (Ezra 7:11-26). The historicity of this decree has frequently been attacked, since it seemed incredible to many modern scholars that the Persian king or his counselors should have concerned themselves with details of Jewish ceremonial as the decree in Ezra 7 claims. Yet, one of the Elephantine papyri, to be discussed in a different section, the so-called “Passover Letter” of Darius II, gives such a close parallel that the opposition to the genuineness of the decree of Artaxerxes I has lately become silent. The “Passover Letter” of Darius shows clearly that the Persian chancellery probably had a department in which experts in Jewish law and customs advised the king in legislative matters. These experts were doubtless Jews.

The chance discovery of the Phoenician Eshmunazar inscription shows that Artaxerxes appreciated the help he received from Sidon in his campaign against the rebellious Egyptians, and rewarded the Sidonians by giving them certain fertile grain lands in the region of Dor on the Palestinian coast. This historical parallel strongly suggests that the important decree by which exceptional privileges were granted to the Jews one year before Megabyzos began his expedition against Egypt was given to create good will among the Jews, and to ensure their continued loyalty in this time of political crisis. To the Jews this decree meant much, because it gave them virtually a semi-independent status. All civil and judicial powers were now returned to the local leadership, and the law of Moses became once more the law of the land. The only matter reserved by the Persians for themselves was the department of revenues. Generous royal gifts and grants from the tribute of the province for the support of the Jewish religious service were probably designed to reconcile the Jews to the fact that foreign tax collectors would remain in their country for an indefinite time.

After seeing his requests granted, Ezra made an appeal to Babylonian Jewry to accompany him to Judea. On the 1st day of Nisan all those who were willing to follow Ezra met “at the river of Ahava.” When the census was taken it became apparent that no Levites were present. After a special effort was made to secure some Levites, the congregation of probably more than 5,000, including women and children, fasted and prayed for divine protection during their long and dangerous journey. Ezra had not dared to request an escort for fear of revealing to the Persian authorities that he lacked faith in the protective power of his God (Ezra 8:1-23).

The caravan set out Nisan 12, on or about April 7, 457 B.C., and after some 4 months arrived at Jerusalem about July 23. There they rested for 3 days. Then they handed over all the royal gifts for the Temple and the official decree to the proper authorities, and celebrated their safe arrival by a great thank offering

(Ezra 8:24-36). The actual work of reconstruction authorized by the decree began some weeks later, in the autumn of the year.

Little is recorded about Ezra's activity in Judea during the next 13 years until Nehemiah arrived at Jerusalem as newly appointed governor. Ezra must have carried out all provisions of the decree, but no record is left of his work, with the exception of one describing his reform work with regard to mixed marriages. The report of this affair covers almost one fourth of the entire book of Ezra (chs.9, 10), thus showing the importance of this reform.

Ezra must have been aware of the presence of pagan or semi-pagan women in some families, since one was found in the family of the high priest. But he worked in quietness for a while, waiting for an opportunity to deal with this matter effectively. This opportunity came on a certain day when some of the leaders officially notified him of the existence of this evil. Ezra responded at once. He began with a public prayer that was at the same time a great sermon and a call for repentance. The result was that the leaders of the country made a spontaneous decision to cleanse the nation from the pagan influence.

A public meeting was then held in the ninth month (approximately December). If this was soon after Ezra's arrival, it was in 457 B.C. The gathered congregation, shivering from the cold and rain, and anxious to return home, gave Ezra full powers to carry out the proposed reform. Little opposition was voiced against this popular decision, because only a small percentage of the people—112 men out of the tens of thousands of Jews who inhabited Judea—were involved in this affair. A committee worked then from December, 457, to April, 456 B.C., and decided every case. A list of all transgressors involved was appended as part of the permanent record of the event. It shows that 27 ecclesiastical workers, among whom were 13 priests and 4 members of the high-priestly family, besides 86 laymen, had foreign wives. The evil had not yet spread far among the people, which explains why the measures taken were so strongly supported by the people, and so easily carried out.

It is generally held that Ezra continued on in Jerusalem into the time of Nehemiah. Hence he faced, at some time preceding Nehemiah's coming (in 444 B.C.), the destructive opposition of enemies who broke down "the wall of Jerusalem" and "burned with fire" its gates (Nehemiah 1:3).

Scholars who equate the Artaxerxes of Ezra 4:7 with Artaxerxes I see in the narrative of verses 7-23 a reference to this attack upon the walls and gates. They thus find in the narrative a Biblical account of the reason for the damaging of the wall as reported to Nehemiah. This view of verses 7-23 requires a temporary reversal of Artaxerxes' favorable attitude toward the Jews as shown in his dealings with Ezra a few years before.

However, the attack referred to in Nehemiah 1:3 can be accounted for historically without Ezra 4, or any specific Biblical narrative. It is a fact that about the year 450 or 449 B.C., Megabyzos, governor of the province of "Beyond the River," which included Judea, rebelled for a period of years against the king of Persia. During this rebellion, either the Jews were loyal to their benefactor Artaxerxes, and were attacked by Samaritan partisans of Megabyzos, or the Samaritans were loyal and took the opportunity of accusing the Jews of siding with Megabyzos. In either case the rebellion of Megabyzos would furnish a plausible setting for the event mentioned in Nehemiah 1:3.

Nehemiah's Governorship - Nehemiah, although a faithful Jew, had advanced in the Persian court until he held the trusted and responsible position of royal cupbearer. Some historians have concluded that he was a eunuch, as he seems to have served the king in the women's quarters (see on Nehemiah 2:6). He was well educated, and later proved himself a good organizer.

In December, 445 B.C., Nehemiah's brother Hanani and some other Jews arrived at Susa for a visit. They may have been the first Jews from Jerusalem whom Nehemiah had seen since Megabyzos' rebellion, which had probably resulted in the breakdown of ordinary communication with Judea. Rumors of troubles with the Samaritans may have reached Nehemiah's ears, but since nothing certain was known, he was anxious to obtain some exact word about the conditions in Judea. Hence, his first question was "concerning the Jews that had escaped, which were left of the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem" (Nehemiah 1:2). The news that he received was bad, worse than he had expected to receive. He learned to his dismay that the walls were "broken down, and the gates thereof ... burned with fire" (Nehemiah 1:3). The shock of this news was so great that Nehemiah, like Daniel (Daniel 9:3), fasted and prayed for days on end.

Nehemiah developed an effective plan during the following four months and also made certain preparations in anticipation of the course of action he proposed to follow. Then he used a favorable situation, when serving the king, to request that he send him to Jerusalem to complete the interrupted work of rebuilding the city's walls. Some have thought that Nehemiah, knowing Artaxerxes' unstable character, and how easily he was influenced by women, had chosen an opportune occasion when "the queen" was present; also that she may have been favorably disposed toward Nehemiah and may have assured him beforehand of her support. Although Nehemiah had prayed earnestly about this situation he was sore afraid that he might lose his life if he moved unwisely in relation to the temperamental king (Nehemiah 2:2, 6). But the king not only granted the request, he also appointed his cupbearer to be the new governor of Judea.

Furnished with official credentials and accompanied by an armed escort, Nehemiah lost no time, but set out as soon as he could secure release from his court duties. He arrived in Jerusalem presumably in the early summer of 444 B.C. For the first few days he kept the true purpose of his arrival secret, so that he could make moves that would assure the greatest possible success for his plans. He also wished to avoid playing into the hands of his enemies, whose work and hatred he well knew. After three days, he had sized up the situation and also had probably seen the condition of the wall, with the exception of its southern sections. In order to gain firsthand knowledge of the condition of those wall sections, made an inspection tour at night, accompanied only by some trusted friends (Nehemiah 2:11-16).

He then laid his plans before the people's leaders, probably on the fourth day after his arrival. He told them of the royal commission, probably assuring them also that they had nothing to fear from their enemies any more. His call to build, "that we be no more a reproach" (Nehemiah 2:17), was an eloquent appeal to the national conscience and dignity. Some were enthusiastic about the prospects of finally having a fortified capital whose wall could offer protection in times of danger, while others seemed to show no interest. The people of cities like Jericho, Mizpah, and Gibeon willingly offered their help in building the wall of Jerusalem, but there is no mention of help from Bethlehem, Netophah, Bethel, and various other cities that had been repopulated since Zerubbabel's time. Among the leaders the same

situation was noticeable. Some supported Nehemiah enthusiastically, while others, like the nobles of Tekoa, “put not their necks to the work of their Lord” (Nehemiah 3:5).

Immediately after the purpose of Nehemiah’s arrival had become known, the enemies of the Jews, especially the political leaders of surrounding nations, made plans to foil Nehemiah’s aims. Of these enemies three are repeatedly mentioned as working against Nehemiah: Sanballat, who was the governor of Samaria, as we now know from the Elephantine papyri; Tobiah, a high official or nobleman of Ammon; and Geshem, the governor of the Arab Lihyanites of Dedan. These three ridiculed the Jews and their leader, accused them of making active preparations for a rebellion, made preparations to attack them by force, arranged to have Nehemiah assassinated, and made numerous attempts to sow discord among the Jews themselves. This work against Nehemiah and his activities was unceasingly carried on as long as the work of rebuilding the city’s wall was in progress, and seems to have ceased only after its completion.

Nehemiah proved to be a man of fearless determination and a good organizer. Neither did he belittle the danger that the efforts of his enemies posed, nor was he unduly disturbed about them. Those willing to assist him in his work of rebuilding Jerusalem’s wall he organized into 42 groups, and spread them over as many wall sections. In the list found in chapter 3 of his book, Nehemiah has left us an excellent source for the study of the topography of Jerusalem’s city wall, and has also provided information concerning many other important items. He tells us, for example, who took part in the work, where it was done, and also what kind of work was required. We learn in this way that some sections of the wall, as well as some gates, had been almost completed in the previous rebuilding activities, and had suffered little during the recent attack, whereas others had to be practically rebuilt. This must be concluded from the observation that the term “built” is used for the activity of some, but the work of others is described as “repaired” in the list of Nehemiah 3. The same conclusion can be reached by reading, for example, that one group, Hanun and the inhabitants of Zanoah, could repair the Valley Gate and about 550 yards of wall (Nehemiah 3:13), while another group could repair only a very small section extending from the door of Eliashib’s house, which apparently stood near the wall, to the end of that same building (Nehemiah 3:21). In some instances, of course, the number of participants may have been responsible for the great differences in the size of wall sections allotted to the various groups. A few gates, as, for example, the Ephraim Gate, mentioned later in connection with the wall’s dedication, seem to have been intact and therefore are left out in the list of sectors on which work was done.

Hence, we must conclude that the work of Nehemiah was not the entire rebuilding of the whole wall and its many gates, but the repairing and completing of the interrupted activity of his predecessors. If the wall had been as it was after Nebuchadnezzar’s forces destroyed it, Nehemiah would not have been able to complete the work in 52 days (Nehemiah 6:15). That he could finish the work in such an exceptionally short period shows clearly that a long time of building activity must have preceded his arrival.

Although the work on the wall proceeded rapidly, it was beset with many difficulties. Nehemiah encountered lack of interest in certain circles of his people, and real opposition from others of them (Nehemiah 4:10; 16:10-12). Worse, there was the constant danger of a disastrous attack on the half-completed city wall by his foreign enemies who were led by Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem. Hence, he armed all workmen, had the wall guarded day and night, and devised a system of alarm in order to be ready at all times to defend Jerusalem. His determination and personal bravery discouraged his enemies and saved the day. They never went further than making threats; no real attack materialized.

On the 25th of Elul (September 21 in 444 B.C.) the work was finished (Nehemiah 6:15). The wall was dedicated by an impressive ceremony. Two processions were formed, one led by Ezra, the other by Nehemiah. Starting at the Valley Gate, both companies went on top of the walls in opposite directions until they met near the north eastern corner of the city, and jointly entered the Temple to give praises to God for the help received in their work, and to celebrate the day with sacrifices (Nehemiah 12:27-43).

After Nehemiah had completed his main task and given Jerusalem a fortified wall, he settled down to a fruitful and peaceful work of governorship. For 12 years he served his people during his first term of office (Nehemiah 5:14). Although Nehemiah was the secular head of Judea in the first place, and worked in the social interests of the nation, he was also deeply interested in the spiritual welfare of his people. We find him abolishing a number of abuses of power and wealth by forcing the usurers to make proper restitution and to promise not to take advantage of their poor fellow citizens, by buying and liberating Jewish slaves, by refusing to accept any payments for himself, and by defraying from his own means his official expenses (Nehemiah 5:1-19). No governor, Nehemiah tells us, had ever been so unselfish and socially minded as he, and he expected to receive a divine reward for his acts of kindness (Nehemiah 5:15, 19).

He also took measures to repopulate Jerusalem, when after the completion of the wall he saw that the capital was an almost empty city. A census was taken, and it was decided to bring one out of every ten of the rural population of Judea to Jerusalem. Many others also were encouraged to move to the capital (Nehemiah 7:4, 5; 11:1, 2).

The religious needs of the people were met by great mass meetings. The first series of these is described in Nehemiah 8-10. Ezra and other leaders read and explained the law to the people. The result was a real spiritual revival, eventuating in a covenant signed by laity and ministers. All promised to follow the law of Moses, to keep themselves free of mixed marriages with pagans, to keep the Sabbath, to meet the expenses of the Temple upkeep and other religious services, and to care for other necessary matters.

All these events seem to have taken place during the first few months of Nehemiah's governorship. As to the remainder of his 12-year period we are left in the dark, and the only further word, found in Nehemiah 13, deals with some measures he was forced to take after his return to Jerusalem at the beginning of his second term of office. Unfortunately, we do not know the date of Nehemiah's second arrival, nor the length of his second term as governor of Judea.

Some time must have elapsed after his departure at the expiration of his first term before he came back, since he found certain unfortunate conditions and practices in Judea, which must have taken some time to develop. His arch-enemy, Tobiah, had been given living quarters in one of the buildings of the Temple compound, the Levites were engaged in agricultural pursuits to make a living because no tithe had been paid by the people for some time. Merchandise was being sold in Jerusalem by foreigners on the Sabbath, and pagan wives were once more found in Jewish families.

These conditions are also severely rebuked by the prophet Malachi, whose prophecies must have been delivered about this time. Immediately after his arrival, Nehemiah vigorously went to work to change this situation. He threw Tobiah's furniture out of the Temple, and gathered the Levites, putting them back to work in the Temple and guaranteeing them their income from the tithe. He induced the people to pay their

tithes regularly, took strong measures to prevent any further transgression of the Sabbath commandment, and caused the foreign wives to be expelled (Nehemiah 13:1-31).

With the description of the measures, the historical records of the book of Nehemiah and of the Old Testament come to an end. But before leaving this last period for which an inspired record is available, one further incident should be mentioned, the unfortunate affair involving Johanan, the high priest, who is mentioned in Ezra (chapter 10:6) and Nehemiah (chapter 12:22). Josephus (*Antiquities* xi. 7.1) informs us that Johanan's brother Jesus (Joshua) was a friend of Bagoas (Persian, Bigvai), the commander of Artaxerxes. Because Bagoas promised to make Joshua high priest, Joshua got into a quarrel with his brother Johanan in the Temple and was killed by him. As a result of this heinous crime, Bagoas entered the Temple, declaring, "Am I not purer than he who was slain (See NOTE) in the temple?" and punished the Jews by exacting for seven years a tax of 50 drachmas for every lamb in the daily sacrifice.

NOTE: A variant reading gives "he who slew," making Bargoas refer to the murderer.

The story was formerly considered fiction by many historians, because Josephus spoke of Bagoas, the mighty commander of Artaxerxes III, well known from later Persian history, whereas Johanan was a contemporary of Ezra and Nehemiah, who lived several generations earlier. The Jewish papyri of Elephantine, however, attest that Johanan was high priest in 410 B.C. and that a governor by the name of Bigvai (Greek, Bagoas) ruled over Judea in 407 B.C. Hence both Bagoas and Johanan were contemporaries of Darius II. They may still have been in office a few years later when Artaxerxes II came to the throne in 405 or 404 B.C., and the crime Josephus relates may have taken place at that time. That one of the Elephantine papyri was jointly sent by Bagoas, the governor of Judea, and Delaiah, the son of Sanballat of Samaria, shows a strange combination of individuals. Bagoas may have been an enemy of Johanan already at that time.

With this high priest the last figure mentioned in the Old Testament leaves our historical horizon, and the Intertestament Period of Jewish history begins, so called because no sacred records are available for this period.

The Jews in Egypt During the 5th Century B.C.

Besides the meager and incidental notes that we find in the Old Testament concerning the Jews in Egypt, some of a prophetic and others of a historical nature (Isaiah 19:18, 19; Jeremiah 43:7; 44:1, 15-28), rich source material exists concerning one Jewish colony. This material consists of a large number of Aramaic papyri found at Elephantine, a Nile island at the southern border of ancient Egypt, about 600 miles south of Cairo. These Elephantine papyri throw much light on contemporary historical events, particularly on the Jewish history of this period.

The History of the Discovery of the Elephantine Papyri - The first group of these documents was bought by C. E. Wilbour in 1893, but did not come to the notice of scholars until 1947. Since Mr. Wilbour had died in Paris in 1896, the papyri remained in his trunk in a New York warehouse for years. It finally came into the Brooklyn Museum, where the precious documents within it were rediscovered. Hence, the first known papyri from Elephantine were those bought from natives in 1904 by Sir Robert Mond and Lady William Cecil, which were published by Sayce and Cowley in 1906. A German

excavation on the island of Elephantine in 1906 and 1907 brought to light more such documents. Their publication in 1911 by Eduard Sachau, together with those published by Sayce and Cowley in 1906, gave to the scholarly world a wealth of material in Aramaic from the time of Ezra and Nehemiah that has furthered study of the postexilic period and of Biblical Aramaic.

All this material, with some stray finds made in the meantime, was republished by A. Cowley in 1923 in a handy edition. In 1953 the 17 rediscovered Wilbour papyri, now in the Brooklyn Museum, were published by Emil G. Kraeling. The number of published Aramaic papyri from Elephantine now stands at more than 100. In this connection a related find should be mentioned, although it does not come from Elephantine: 13 official Aramaic letters written on leather, which, like the Elephantine papyri, come from the 5th century B.C. They mention the same Persian governor of Egypt as the Elephantine documents and contain certain material that sheds light on the record in Nehemiah. Bought from an Egyptian dealer by L. Borchardt sometime before 1933, when the find was first announced, these documents were subsequently published by G. R. Driver (1954), and together with the new Brooklyn papyri are now arousing a keen interest among Oriental and Biblical scholars.

The Importance of the Elephantine Papyri for Biblical studies - In several respects the Elephantine papyri have been of the utmost importance for Biblical studies. They have furnished rich material in Aramaic from the same period in which the Aramaic sections of Ezra were written, and from a slightly later time than the book of Daniel, which also contains six chapters in Aramaic. These texts have clarified the meaning of obscure Biblical words, supported the meaning of others not well known before the discovery of these texts, and enriched our Aramaic vocabulary. They have also provided much comparative material by which the similarity of the Biblical Aramaic with that of the Elephantine documents can be established. This, in turn, proves the great antiquity of the Aramaic parts of the Bible.

The official documents found among the Elephantine papyri corroborate the genuineness of the similar documents of Ezra and prove that skepticism often expressed about their authenticity was, after all, unfounded. They have, furthermore, shown that the Persian kings issued decrees that concerned themselves with details of religious matters. For example, a decree of Darius II, found in Elephantine, directed the Elephantine Jews to celebrate the Passover with a strict observance of the Mosaic regulations.

These papyri have furnished sufficient evidence to settle the old question of whether the Artaxerxes of the book of Nehemiah was the first king by that name or the second. The evidence they provide proves that Nehemiah could have been governor only under Artaxerxes I. These papyri reveal that the Johanan of Nehemiah 12:22 was high priest in 410 B.C. Since Johanan was the grandson of Eliashib, the high priest of Nehemiah's days, Nehemiah's governorship must have preceded the high priesthood of Johanan. Also the fact that Sanballat was governor of Samaria, as attested in the Elephantine papyri, has clarified a number of historical problems in connection with Nehemiah's story. Although Sanballat was apparently still alive in 407 B.C. when he was mentioned in a letter from Elephantine, he was now an old man whose responsibilities were borne by his sons. This supports the conclusion that the work of Nehemiah, when Sanballat was his vigorous enemy—probably in the prime of life—was a thing of the past in 407 B.C.

The Elephantine papyri are also very important because of the fact that many of them are dated, and that some bear double dates, the Egyptian legal date and its Jewish equivalent. The double-dated documents

have made it possible to reconstruct the Jewish calendar in use by the Elephantine Jews of the 5th century. This proves to have been a lunar calendar, with the New Year beginning in the autumn.

The Jewish Colony at Elephantine During the 5th Century B.C. - The island of Elephantine (Egyptian, Yeb) lies below the first Nile cataract and forms a natural barrier toward the south. It was an important border fortress at different times in Egypt's history and was called "the Gate of the South." Under the reign of Psamtik I (663-610 B.C.) this island housed a strong garrison of mercenary forces, but it is not certain whether Jews were already living there. However, Jews belonged to the forces of Psamtik II (595-589 B.C.), who, as Herodotus states, carried out a campaign against Nubia, in which, according to the Jewish Aristeas letter, he was accompanied by Jewish mercenary troops.

It is well known that the kings of the Twenty-sixth Egyptian Dynasty leaned heavily on foreign soldiers. Inscriptions testify to the presence of Ionian, Carian, and Phoenician mercenaries in the garrisons of southern Egypt. Although Jews are not mentioned by name, one text speaks of soldiers from Palestine. It is possible that Jews of Elephantine had found their way to Egypt before the destruction of Jerusalem. Jeremiah addresses, along with other Jewish residents of Egypt, those of Pathros (Jeremiah 44:1), an Egyptian geographical name meaning literally "The South Land," in which the area of Elephantine is usually included.

Although the origin of the Jewish colony on Elephantine is not yet definitely known, these people must have lived on the island for some time before 525 B.C., for when Cambyses conquered Egypt, they already formed a well-settled colony in the possession of a temple where they worshiped Yahu (an abbreviated form of the name Yahweh, or Jehovah). They were taken over by the Persian administration into its military system and continued to constitute the garrison of the fortress Elephantine. They called themselves "the Jewish army," which army was divided into standards or companies, under Persian and Babylonian commanders, and centuries, with officers bearing Jewish and Babylonian names. No Egyptian names appear among the army personnel. We therefore conclude that the Egyptians were kept out of the army, since their loyalty to the Persian king could be questioned.

All judicial power was in the hands of the Persian commanding officer of the fortress, but internal affairs of the Jewish colony were controlled by the chief of the "congregation." The Jews were in possession of houses and other hereditary property and some of them seem to have been well-to-do people.

Being Jews they were, in the first place, worshipers of Yahu. To Him they had built a temple with five entrances of stone, and pillars of stone, but the walls were probably of brick. The roof was of cedarwood, and the wooden doors swung on bronze hinges. Gold and silver vessels belonged to the equipment of the temple, and on its altar the Jews offered burnt sacrifices, meal offerings and incense. Every Jew paid 2 shekels for the upkeep of the temple in contrast to 1/3 shekel in Judea (see Nehemiah 10:32). The Jews who built this temple had not been influenced by the reform of Josiah, who had reorganized Judea's religious practices according to the laws of Moses that clearly prohibited any separatist sanctuaries (Deuteronomy 12:13, 14; 2 Kings 23:8). Furthermore, they served not only Yahu but also several other deities besides Him, among them Ashim-Bethel and 'Anath-Bethel. While Ashim (for a similar name, see on 2 Kings 17:30) is not well known from other sources, we are well acquainted with the Canaanite goddess Anath, a bloodthirsty, immoral deity. Hence, we find the Jews of Elephantine standing in some respects on the religious level of the time of King Manasseh, with a separatist temple, and serving, besides their national God, certain deities of pagan nations, especially those that promoted fertility. Of the

religious reform of Josiah nothing can be traced in Elephantine. And nothing is felt of the work of a Jeremiah, Daniel, or Ezekiel, whose influence is clearly discernible among the returned exiles then settled in Jerusalem and the province of Judea.

One very important document coming from the year 419 B.C., shows that the Persian king (Darius II) issued directives concerning the religious life of the Jews. This particular document is, unfortunately, poorly preserved, but this much is clearly ascertainable, that Darius had given an order that the Feast of Unleavened Bread be kept from Nisan 15 to 21, that the Jews should cleanse themselves for this occasion, and that they should not drink (intoxicating beverages) or eat anything that contained leaven. We do not know the reason for the issuance of the decree. But this much can be concluded with certainty, that the king had counselors versed in Jewish law able to compose such a decree, and who were also interested in having the king sign, such a directive. It is possible that this decree went to all Jews in the empire, although the only proof of its existence comes from Elephantine. The decree shows that the Persian kings supported the religious life of the Jews and the laws of Moses. This fact provides corroboration of the genuineness of the record of similar decrees found in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

Because of the extreme importance of the decree a translation of the poorly preserved letter containing it is offered herewith. The sections enclosed in brackets [] are reconstructed. The translation follows principally that of A. Cowley, *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C.* (1923), pp. 62, 63, but has also profited by the suggestions of Emil G. Kraeling, made in *The Brooklyn Museum Aramaic Papyri* (1953), pp. 92–95. It varies, however, in some details in which the present translator disagrees with the previous translations.

1. [To my brethr]en
2. [Yedo]niah and his colleagues (and) the Jewish ga[rri]son], your brother Hanan[iah]. The peace of my brethren may God desire.
3. And now this year, the year 5 of Darius the king, from the king there was sent to Arsh[am saying],
4. [In the month of Nisan let there be a Passover for the Jewish garrison]. Now thus ye shall count: four[teen days]
5. [of the month Nisan and ke]lep [the Passover], and from the 15th day to the 21st day of Ni[san]
6. [are seven days of Unleavened Bread]. Be ye clean and take heed. Work no[t]
7. [on the 15th day and on the 21st day. Beer no]t shall ye drink and anything [in] which [there is] leaven
8. [do not eat, from the 15th day from] sunset till the 21st day of Nis[an, seven]
9. [days, let it not be seen among you; do not br]ing it into your chambers, but seal it up during [those] day[s].
10. [Let this be done as Darius] the k[ing commanded]. Address: To my brethren Yedoniah and his colleagues the Jewish garrison, your brother Hanani[ah] ...

These foreign Jews serving the Persian ruler as soldiers were disliked by the native Egyptians. This hatred was certainly increased when Cambyses, at the time of his conquest of Egypt, destroyed the Egyptian temple on Elephantine dedicated to the ram-headed god Khnum, but left the Jews and their temple unmolested. Because the Jews made proselytes among the Egyptians as the documents attest, and because they fared well financially, and treated the native Egyptians with contempt, calling their priests by a contemptuous name, and the mutual aversion increased until it produced an eruption.

When Arsham, or Arsames, the Persian satrap of Egypt, was absent from Egypt in 410 B.C. the priests of Khnum bribed the Persian commander Widrang, or Hydarnes, of Elephantine to let his son Nephayan, the commander of Syene (Aswân), come over with his non-Jewish troops to Elephantine and spoil the Jewish temple and destroy it thoroughly. When Arsames returned to Egypt the Jews had the satisfaction of seeing Hydarnes and Nephayan punished—possibly executed—for their crime. However, they did not succeed in obtaining from him a permit to rebuild their temple, since the satrap seems to have been fearful of a new outbreak. By making his permit dependent on one to be obtained from the authorities at Jerusalem, Arsames thought to shift to other shoulders the responsibility for rejecting the request. He may previously have known Nehemiah or other leaders of Judea, and probably expected that they would not give a permit for the rebuilding of a separatist temple.

The Jews of Elephantine wrote a letter to the high priest Johanan of Jerusalem placing their request before him. The Jerusalem authorities ignored this request completely and failed to send any reply. Hence, the Elephantine Jews, after having waited in vain for more than two years, wrote again in 407 B.C., this time placing their request before Bagoas, the Persian governor of Judea, and at the same time before the two sons of Sanballat, the governor of Samaria, who apparently carried on the administration for their old father, Bagoas, who did not live on good terms with Johanan, conferred with Delaiah of Samaria and decided to allow the Jews of Elephantine to rebuild their temple. However, bloody sacrifices were not to be offered in the new temple. Receiving this permit, Arsames seems to have endorsed the grant, and the temple was rebuilt, as can be seen from the fact that in 402 B.C. the temple is again referred to, in an Aramaic document, as existing on the island.

Very soon after this time a successful rebellion of the Egyptians against the Persian rule once more brought independence to Egypt, and probably marked the end of the Jewish colony on Elephantine. The last known dated Jewish document from that island was written on June 19, 400 B.C. Then a curtain of silence fell over this interesting community. The temple was probably again destroyed, and the Jews either killed or driven out. Nothing further is known of their fate.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

PERSIAN KING CYRUS: GOD'S SHEPHERD

King Cyrus in Isaiah's Prophecy

Isaiah prophesied that King Cyrus would enact the foremost decree for rebuilding the Jewish temple. The prophet began his message by honoring God for creating the heavens, then he praises God's providence for bringing to life His servant Cyrus whom the Lord preordained hundreds of years in advance (Isaiah 44:24). Moreover, Isaiah confirmed that the prophecy would be fulfilled through Cyrus: that Jerusalem shall be re-inhabited and the cities of Judah shall be built (Isaiah 44:26). Having delineated the ministry of God's servant, Isaiah proceeded to identify the servant by his rightful name Cyrus. Thus, God honoured Cyrus above the monarchs on earth because he would proclaim the going forth of the command to rebuild Jerusalem and the Jewish temple. Therefore, Isaiah stated that it is the Lord:

“That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid” (Isaiah 44:28).

From a prophetic viewpoint it is clear that the royal decree issued by Cyrus is the foremost of all the three decrees regarding Jerusalem's temple. If that were not so then why would Cyrus be in the prophecy of Isaiah? You see, Isaiah does not mention any other monarch but Cyrus, who would command the laying of the foundation stone for the house of the Lord in Jerusalem. The day when the temple's foundation stone was to be laid, which Isaiah prophesied and that was fulfilled with Cyrus, Daniel was told to mark it as the starting point for yet another time prophecy. It was Cyrus who issued “the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem” (Daniel 9:25); in the chronological year 3700. (This will be explained in detail later). Now, from a chronological standpoint, Cyrus' decree takes on added importance. Bear in mind that when Jeremiah's prophecy of the 70 years desolation ended, the next time prophecy of 2300 years set off. This transition from prophetic time to prophetic time made it possible for the biblical chronology to remain uninterrupted. But we will review this later.

Going back in time more than two centuries prior to Cyrus' birth, a prophecy was given about the laying of the temple foundation stone by Cyrus (Isaiah 44:28). The Lord called Cyrus His anointed “whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him” (Isaiah 45:1). Then, for Israel's sake, the Lord declared about Cyrus “...I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me” (Isaiah 45:4). And then the Lord revealed about the good pleasure that Cyrus would accomplish in favor of Jerusalem and of God's children:

“I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will direct all his ways: he shall build my city, and he shall let go my captives, not for price nor reward, saith the LORD of hosts” (Isaiah 45:13).

Biography of Cyrus in the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel

Bear in mind that the biblical chronology was preserved, in Daniel's time, by linking the chronology of the children of Israel with the chronology of the Babylonians. Also remember that the decree to liberate Israel granting them special permission to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple was issued by three Persian Kings: Cyrus, Artaxerxes and Darius.

But it was King Cyrus whom God honored, as it is written in another context: "Them that honour me I will honour" (1 Samuel 2:30). It is amazing that of all the good foreign kings, Cyrus is mentioned in the Chronicles of the kings of Israel. You will not find the name of Artaxerxes in the Chronicles of the Hebrew people. Yet Israel's sacred history of its monarchy contains the magnificent history of God's decree by the hand of King Cyrus of Persia of whom it was prophesied by both Isaiah and Jeremiah. Therefore, the Chronicles of the kings of Israel are very emphatic that the prophecy of Jeremiah was fulfilled by the enactment of King Cyrus' decree; that is, Cyrus was the king to set Israel at liberty to return home to rebuild and restore Jerusalem after its ravaging seventy year desolations. The prophecy reads:

"For thus saith the LORD, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place" (Jeremiah 29:10).

The writing of Cyrus' decree in 3700 was for the purpose of fulfilling the prophecy given by God to his prophet Jeremiah. But let the Word of God in the Chronicles of the kings of Israel present it:

"Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath the LORD God of heaven given me; and he hath charged me to build him an house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? The LORD his God be with him, and let him go up" (2 Chronicles 36:22-23).

What is God telling us by repeating Cyrus' magnificent event? Notice that to emphasize the fact that it was King Cyrus who fulfilled Jeremiah's prophecy, and also for corroborating Israel's sacred chronological history, a comprehensive and precise transcript of the wording of the prophetic decree of King Cyrus' is repeated in Ezra 1:1-3.

With the reiteration of God's sacred historical facts we can better understand the level of importance of Jeremiah's prophecy, which was fulfilled in its appointed time. God also saw fit to repeat in writing the decree of King Cyrus. This had been memorized and repeated verbatim by the exiled Hebrews who were encouraged to search the Scriptures and know that God had appointed Cyrus to fulfill this prophecy.

Another important fact is that Ezra wrote of the Babylonian monarch who destroyed the Jewish temple and of the Persian king who commanded to rebuild it. Notice that the writing of Ezra does not commend Artaxerxes but rather Cyrus for building what Nebuchadnezzar had utterly destroyed, he wrote:

"But after that our fathers had provoked the God of heaven unto wrath, he gave them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, the Chaldean, who destroyed this house, and carried the people

away into Babylon. But in the first year of Cyrus the king of Babylon the same king Cyrus made a decree to build this house of God” (Ezra 5:12-13).

Chart Concerning Cyrus in the Prophecies

GOD DECLARES	CYRUS	ARTAXERXES	TEXT
He is my shepherd	YES	–	ISAIAH 44:28
He shall perform all my pleasure	YES	–	ISAIAH 44:28
Saying to Jerusalem, Thou shall be built	YES	–	ISAIAH 44:28
And to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.	YES	–	ISAIAH 44:28
Thus saith the LORD to his anointed	YES	–	ISAIAH 45:1
I have raised him up in righteousness	YES	–	ISAIAH 45:13
I will direct all his ways	YES	–	ISAIAH 45:13
He shall build my city	YES	–	ISAIAH 45:13
He shall let go my captives	YES	–	ISAIAH 45:13
HE FULFILLED GOD’S PROPHECY AND SAID ABOUT GOD: “He hath charged me to build him an house in Jerusalem” “He made a decree to build this house of God”	YES	–	ISAIAH 44:28, ISAIAH 45:13, 2 CHRONICLES 36:23, EZRA 1:3, EZRA 5:13

Daniel Confirms Fulfillment of the Prophecy

Daniel received God’s revelation that the time had come for the fulfillment of the prophecy written by Isaiah pertaining King Cyrus. Daniel understood by the books that King Cyrus’ would shortly fulfill the prophecy by his enactment of the decree for the liberation of many Jews from Babylonian captivity. Notice that Isaiah’s prophecy coincides with that of Jeremiah. Remember that Jeremiah prophesied that the land of Judah would undergo desolation and serve the King of Babylon for the period of 70 years

(Jeremiah 25:11). Jeremiah had also foretold that when those 70 years would pass God would punish the king of Babylon, for their iniquity (Jeremiah 25:12). The time when God punished the King of Babylon concurs with the time when Cyrus performed God's pleasure (Isaiah 44:28) in letting God's captives free. God had anticipated and given to Daniel this important information before it happened.

In the first year of the Babylonian King Belshazzar Daniel had a dream and visions that opened his understanding in regards to the succession of the world empires (Daniel 7:1). In that occasion Daniel saw four beasts coming out of the sea (Daniel 7:3), which represented four kings that would have dominion on the earth (Daniel 7:17). Daniel became very concerned about the vision, yet he kept it undisclosed (Daniel 7:28). But in the third year of Belshazzar, Daniel saw another vision that helped him understand his previous vision he had two years earlier (Daniel 8:1). He wrote:

“Then I lifted up mine eyes, and saw, and, behold, there stood before the river a ram which had two horns: and the two horns were high; but one was higher than the other, and the higher came up last” (Daniel 8:3).

To Daniel it was revealed that beasts are symbols to portray kingdoms (Daniel 7:17). In this case the ram is a portrayal of the Medo-Persian Empire. To Daniel it was revealed that the ram's two horns are the kings of Media and Persia (Daniel 8:20). Therefore, Daniel foreknew about Cyrus and Darius conquering Babylon. Daniel also knew that the weaker horn Darius the Mede would sit on the throne as the conquering king. To Daniel was also revealed that the stronger horn Cyrus would shortly afterwards be crowned king instead of Darius his ally. Consequently, Cyrus took the Medo-Persian Empire from the rule of Darius in the very year of the Babylonian conquest.

With the vision of the ram Daniel was assured that the prophecies given to Isaiah and Jeremiah would certainly be fulfilled in the life of Cyrus, the man appointed by God. But now there was another concern in Daniel's mind. Although he knew the prophecies concerning the desolations of Jerusalem, he was puzzled by yet another time-prophecy of 2300 years (Daniel 8:14), which God reminded him: “The vision of the evening and the morning which was told is true: wherefore shut thou up the vision; for it shall be for many days” (Daniel 8:26).

The knowledge of the vision (Daniel 8:14, 26) overwhelmed Daniel and he fell sick (Daniel 8:27). Although Daniel had been assured that Isaiah's prophecy would certainly be fulfilled by Cyrus, Daniel was concerned about the exact chronology for the fulfillment of prophecy. Daniel wanted to corroborate that Isaiah's prophecy concerning Cyrus would be fulfilled according to the chronological data given by Jeremiah. Therefore, in the first year of Darius the Mede (Daniel 9:1), says the prophet: “I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem” (Daniel 9:2).

The Desolations of the Sanctuary

It was more painful for a righteous Hebrew to know that the temple of God remains in ruins than to see his children of the promise under captivity. In like manner it was more sorrowful for Eli to hear that the Ark of the Covenant had been taken than to hear that his two children had been killed (1 Sam. 4:17, 18).

Likewise Daniel when he made confession he pleaded with God for the restoration of Jerusalem. But Daniel's intercessory prayer is not merely to attain their material restitution of Jerusalem's former glory, but also the spiritual restitution of Israel's faithfulness to God's Commandments (Daniel 9:10, 11). Therefore, Daniel pleaded with God to grant them forgiveness for their sins, as he confessed that because of their iniquities they were a reproach to their neighboring nations. The prophet beseeched God to turn away His anger from Jerusalem, His holy mountain (Daniel 9:16, 20). Daniel's request was not more a physical blessing than a spiritual one, his prayer therefore is comparable to the command King David gave to his son Solomon when he told him to seek the Lord his God, to build the sanctuary of the Lord, to bring the Ark of the Covenant and holy vessels to that sanctuary (1 Chronicles 22:19).

Now, you may ask, what qualifies Jerusalem as God's holy mountain? The answer to that question is the Sanctuary of the Lord. Notice that the greatest reproach to the Hebrews was the destruction and desolation of the temple, Daniel prays: "Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake" (Daniel 9:17). Therefore, when the prophet speaks of the desolations of Jerusalem, his main concern is the temple in ruins.

Once again Daniel corroborated Jeremiah's prophecy that the Lord would accomplish 70 years in the desolations of Jerusalem (Daniel 9:2). Ezra's prayer adds extra information to the fact that this is a reference to the temple that was left desolate:

"For we were bondmen; yet our God hath not forsaken us in our bondage, but hath extended mercy unto us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to give us a reviving, to set up the house of our God, and to repair the desolations thereof, and to give us a wall in Judah and in Jerusalem." (Ezra 9:9).

The Laying of the Temple's Foundation Stone

Daniel followed the principle that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation (2 Peter 1:20) and he searched the writings of Isaiah and Jeremiah to discern the fulfillment of prophecy. Through the writings of these three great prophets we also understand the fulfillment of prophecy in the life of God's anointed shepherd: the Persian King Cyrus (Isaiah 44:28).

The laying of the temple's foundation stone was a prophecy fulfilled by the enactment of Cyrus' decree, that act also marked the beginning of yet another time-prophecy. The date of Cyrus' decree is the landmark to begin counting the 2300 year prophecy, and to fully understand this, we need to review Isaiah's prophecy of what the decree would accomplish. Of Cyrus it was prophesied to be the monarch: "saying to Jerusalem, thou shalt be built and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid" (Isaiah 44:28). Daniel knew perfectly well, that the prophecy regarding the decree to lay the foundation of the house of God in Jerusalem would be fulfilled by Cyrus. He also understood that before Cyrus' enactment of this decree, the temple would have been in desolation for 70 years, as prophesied by his antecessor Jeremiah (Daniel 9:2). Now when this prophecy was fulfilled it was confirmed that the temple had been in desolation for seventy years since the time when it was burned down (2 Chronicles 36:21-23).

Prior to the fulfillment of Isaiah and Jeremiah's prophecy, in the life of Cyrus, God directed Daniel to pay attention to the date of the decree "to restore and to build Jerusalem" (Daniel 9:25). That is because the

prophecy of Daniel 8:14 would set off in that very year. Therefore, the chronology in the Word of God should be studied carefully in order to understand the prophecies. The reason for that is because the chronology and the prophecies go hand in hand in bringing the key of knowledge regarding the coming of the Savior of this world.

The Going Forth of the Commandment

THE GOING-FORTH DECREE	CYRUS	ARTAXERXES	TEXT
HE FULFILLED THE PROPHECY By saying: “To the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid ”	YES	–	ISAIAH 44:28
HE DECREED - “Let the house of God be built in his place”	YES	–	EZRA 5:15
HE COMMANDED –“Let the foundations be strongly laid”	YES	–	EZRA 6:3
HIS GOVERNOR - “Sheshbazzar, laid the foundation of the house of God which is in Jerusalem”	YES	–	EZRA 5:14
HE FULFILLED THE PROPHECY By “saying to Jerusalem , Thou shalt be built ”	YES	–	ISAIAH 44:28
HE DECREED - “the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem”	YES	–	DANIEL 9:25

Although Daniel had understood Isaiah’s prophecy regarding the restoration of Jerusalem and the laying of the foundation of the temple’s stone by Cyrus, he had been anxious about the 2300 year time prophecy of Daniel 8:14. He had not yet understood the meaning to the longest time prophecy. Yet he knew the symbolic language regarding the cleansing of the Sanctuary. It is a language pertaining to the atonement for the sins of God’s people. Daniel was told that this prophecy was for the time of the end (Daniel 8:17). That prophecy was given in the last year of the Babylonian King Belshazzar (Dan 8:1) and its interpretation was revealed in the first year of the Median King Darius (Daniel 9:1). To Daniel it was explained:

“Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times” (Daniel 9:25).

The “going forth” of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem was the first of the three decrees that the Persian kings enacted: Cyrus’s decree. The phrase used in the Hebrew is מוֹצֵא מוֹצֵא môtâ' môtâ'. A going forth, that is, (the act) an egress, or (the place) an exit (Mickelson’s Enhanced Strong’s Greek and Hebrew Dictionaries). This expression appears only four times in the Bible and it always conveys the idea of dawning, rising or budding, therefore, the beginning of something.

For instance: The Lord speaks of His going forth prepared as the morning (Hosea 6:3). Psalms 19:6 contains the same expression “mowtsa” referring to the rising of the sun. In Daniel 9:25 it should be understood according to its original meaning but also according to the prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah who had prophesied of King Cyrus. Therefore, the going forth of the command to restore and to build Jerusalem represents the first decree, the one that ushered in the dawning of the temple restoration. Consequently, Cyrus’ enactment is the foremost decree, the beginning of the decrees.

To Restore and to Build

Daniel understood that the restoration and building of Jerusalem was not solely a physical matter but also a spiritual one. This restoration would begin to take place from the moment God gives repentance to Israel and it would be concrete until Cyrus enacted his decree to restore to Jerusalem that which was taken from her.

Notice that the verb “to restore” as used in Daniel 9:25, is the Hebrew word shuwb (shoob) שׁוּב (to turn back, carry again back, recover, render again... etc.), That verb is used in Genesis 20:7 when God told Abimelech to restore the wife of Abraham. Joseph also commanded “to restore” every one of his brothers’ money (Genesis 42:25). David promised Mephibosheth “to restore” all the land, his rightful inheritance that had been taken from him (2 Sam. 9:7). Shuwb is used to restore the kingdom (2 Sam. 16:3), the goods (Job 20:10), lands, houses and money (Nehemiah 5:11). It is also used to restore the joy of salvation in Psalms 51:12. Notice that Shuwb is used in Isaiah 1:26 when God told Jerusalem that He will restore its judges and counselors as at the beginning in order for Jerusalem to be called “the city of righteousness the faithful city”. Isaiah’s message is not referring to the physical restoration of a judicial system but to the spiritual restoration of faithfulness and righteousness because the city has become a spiritual harlot (Isaiah 1:21). Regarding this restoration Jeremiah had prophesied:

“Yea, thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, concerning the vessels that remain in the house of the LORD, and in the house of the king of Judah and of Jerusalem. They shall be carried to Babylon, and there shall they be until the day that I visit them, saith the LORD; then will I bring them up, and restore them to this place” (Jeremiah 27:21-22).

Now what was it that Cyrus would restore to Jerusalem apart from building the city and the temple? God had told Jeremiah that the sacred vessels used for the temple service were to be carried to Babylon and remain there until the Lord’s would again demonstrate His pleasure for Jerusalem (Jeremiah 27:22). But now notice how the verb Shuwb “to restore” is used in this prophecy when God said concerning His sacred vessels: “Then will I bring them up, and restore them to this place” (Jeremiah 27:22). You see this is a vivid example that God is primarily interested in the spiritual restoration of His people. Bear in mind that faithfulness and righteousness could only be restored if the children of Israel pledged their allegiance to keep God’s Commandments.

King Cyrus fulfilled Jeremiah's prophecy and put an end to the 70 year desolation of the temple in Jerusalem. He also fulfilled Jeremiah's prophecy regarding the restoration of the vessels dedicated to the house of God. God was faithful to His word in the mouth of Jeremiah when He stirred King Cyrus heart to issue the prophetic decree as he commanded: "Let the golden and silver vessels of the house of God... be restored, and brought again unto the temple which is at Jerusalem, everyone to his place, and place them in the house of God" (Ezra 6:5).

Why does God emphasize the fulfillment of His prophecy regarding Cyrus restoring the holy vessels? Notice how Ezra highlights Jeremiah's prophecy in the edict of King Cyrus: "Also Cyrus the king brought forth the vessels of the house of the LORD, which Nebuchadnezzar had brought forth out of Jerusalem, and had put them in the house of his gods" (Ezra 1:7; 5:14).

Notice that Cyrus was expecting to fulfill God's prophecy as proclaimed by Isaiah. And Daniel was expecting both Isaiah and Jeremiah's prophecies to be fulfilled in the life of King Cyrus. Notice that Daniel uses the same verb Shuwb "to restore" Daniel 9:25 as in the above mentioned letter of Ezra.

WHO DECREED TO RESTORE?	CYRUS	ARTAXERXES	TEXT
PROPHECY ABOUT THE VESSELS: "They shall be carried to Babylon, and there shall they be until the day that I visit them, saith the LORD; then will I bring them up, and restore them to this place"	YES	—	JEREMIAH 27:21-22
"Cyrus the king brought forth the vessels of the house of the LORD"	YES	—	EZRA 1:3 EZRA 5:14
THE DECREE TO RESTORE "Let the golden and silver vessels of the house of God... be restored , and brought again unto the temple..."	YES	—	EZRA 6:5
THE DECREE TO RESTORE: "From the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem..."	YES	—	DANIEL 9:25

Jeremiah's prophecy was not about the reestablishment of the political and legislative system in Jerusalem. Jeremiah's prophecy envisioned the act of restoring the temple vessels and the ending of Jerusalem's desolations. On the other hand Isaiah's prophecy foretold the act of laying the foundation stone to the temple and the act of re-building Jerusalem. Both prophecies were to be fulfilled by the command of

Cyrus. Daniel was attentive to Isaiah and Jeremiah's prophecies and in accordance to those prophecies God directed him to understand the 2300 year prophecies of Daniel 8:14 and Daniel 9:25-27.

King Cyrus Knew About the Importance of Chronology

Long before it happened, it had been prophesied by God's prophets that the Persian King Cyrus would conquer Babylon, and it was fulfilled exactly as prophesied (Isaiah 45:1, 2). But more importantly, this prophecy was fulfilled in the year 3700, exactly 70 years after the desolations of Jerusalem, which began in 3630 with the destruction and desolation of the temple. Therefore, when King Cyrus enacted the decree to restore and to build Jerusalem he stated that it was in order to fulfill Jeremiah's prophecy (2 Chronicles 36:22). Now, why did Cyrus omit mentioning Isaiah as well? Was not Isaiah's prophecy also fulfilled on the day Cyrus enacted his decree? It appears that he understood the importance of chronology in the fulfillment of prophecies. Therefore he used Jeremiah to let his readers know that the prophecies were fulfilled by God's providence, in its exact chronological time. Bear in mind that Jeremiah used extensive chronological data when he wrote the prophecies.

Artaxerxes' Decree

Like Cyrus, Artaxerxes also decreed in favor of Jerusalem (Ezra 7:7), namely; that Hebrew exiles go up to Jerusalem (Ezra 7:13). But when he enacted his decree, the temple building was well advanced. At that time the Hebrews were given great amounts of silver and gold offerings which Artaxerxes had freely given to God, "whose habitation is in Jerusalem," as he expressed (Ezra 7:15). That money was intended for embellishing the Jewish temple. Artaxerxes' letter clearly delineates that these Jews were given the green light to take all the silver and gold that they could find in the province of Babylon together with the offerings of people and priests. Such money commanded by Artaxerxes, was to be used solely to beautify the house of their God in Jerusalem (Ezra 7:16).

Notice that the decree is continually directed toward the finishing of the house of the Lord in Jerusalem. The Jews were also encouraged to set apart offerings for purchasing bullocks, rams, and lambs to be sacrificed on the altar. Artaxerxes ordered: "offer them upon the altar of the house of your God which is in Jerusalem" (Ezra 7:17). You see, the temple was already reared up. Artaxerxes also commanded saying:

"The vessels also that are given thee for the service of the house of thy God, those deliver thou before the God of Jerusalem" (Ezra 7:19).

Those vessels spoken of by Artaxerxes were a free-will gift from him to be used in the temple. But also remember that according to Jeremiah's prophecy and as Ezra wrote in his book; the holy vessels taken from the Jewish temple by Nebuchadnezzar were restored by the Persian King Cyrus when he enacted the most important decree, it is written:

"And the vessels also of gold and silver of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took out of the temple that was in Jerusalem, and brought them into the temple of Babylon, those did Cyrus the king, take out of the temple of Babylon, and they were delivered unto one, whose name was Sheshbazzar, whom he had made governor" (Ezra 5:14).

Summing up Artaxerxes decree we conclude that it was intended to further enhance the temple structure, which, since the edict of King Cyrus, had been in building for many years and was already reared up. The money offered by Artaxerxes was for the purpose of putting the finishing touches to the building. That is the reason expressed in Ezra's prayer of gratitude to God; he prays:

“Blessed be the LORD God of our fathers, which hath put such a thing as this in the king's heart, to beautify the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem” (Ezra 7:27).

ANOTHER DECREE	CYRUS	ARTAXERXES	TEXT
He made a decree, allowing the people of Israel, priests and Levites , to go up to Jerusalem	–	YES	EZRA 7:13
He gave money for bullocks, rams, lambs to be offered in the temple	–	YES	EZRA 7:17
He gave vessels for the service of the house of God in Jerusalem	–	YES	EZRA 7:19
He made the priests, Levites, and singers exempt from paying toll, tribute, or custom	–	YES	EZRA 7:24
He ordered Ezra to set magistrates and judges in Jerusalem	–	YES	EZRA 7:25
God put in the king's heart, to beautify the house of the LORD	–	YES	EZRA 7:27
By force and power. He decreed that the city of Jerusalem cease to be built .	–	YES	EZRA 4:21-23

Nehemiah Travels to Jerusalem

In the 20th year of Artaxerxes, Nehemiah who was at the palace, in Shushan (Nehemiah 1:1) received a visit from Hanani who gave him the bad news that the walls of Jerusalem had been broken down and its gates had been burned (Nehemiah 1:2-3). When Nehemiah received this bad news he began fasting for several days and prayed before God (Nehemiah 1:7)

Having prayed to God, Nehemiah presented his concerns before Artaxerxes (Nehemiah 2:1). In those days Nehemiah's countenance was sad, so the king asked him to give an explanation as to why he looked so depressed (Nehemiah 2:2). Nehemiah requested the king to let him return to Jerusalem and repair the

city's gates that had been burned (Nehemiah 2:5-6). The time he requested was 12 years, from the 20th year to the 32nd of King Artaxerxes (Nehemiah 5:14).

When Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem, he found Sanballat and Tobiah, two foes who had been battling against the work of rebuilding Jerusalem (Nehemiah 2:10). But Nehemiah was not discouraged by the schemes of their enemies, although he acknowledged the distress that their enemies had caused them. He urged his countrymen: "come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach" (Nehemiah 2:17). When those foes heard that the walls of Jerusalem had no breach that had not been repaired, they tried to kill Nehemiah by inviting him to a private meeting with them (Nehemiah 6:1-2). But Nehemiah declined their invitation. As Tobiah could not do any physical harm to Nehemiah, he proceeded to write a letter in which he accused the Jews and Nehemiah of rebellion. He invented a report saying that Nehemiah was building the walls with the purpose of setting himself up as king (Nehemiah 6:6).

Artaxerxes Annuls His Own Decree

Unlike King Cyrus whose decree remained valid all the days of his reign, Artaxerxes nullified his decree that would have continued to favor the building of Jerusalem.

King Artaxerxes had granted Nehemiah's request to go and rebuild the city of Jerusalem and its gates which had been consumed with fire (Nehemiah 2:3). Because he was pressured by his own people, Artaxerxes canceled the validity of his letter written to Nehemiah and nullified his own decree extended to Ezra.

According to the will of God, and through Ezra's request (Ezra 7:6), King Artaxerxes enacted his decree in the 7th year of his reign (Ezra 7:7). Remember that the purpose of Artaxerxes' decree was to complete the work of the house of the Lord, that is to beautify the temple (Ezra 7:27). Ezra was accompanied by other priests and Levites (Ezra 7:7), indicating that they were consecrated to go and minister for the house of the Lord in Jerusalem.

On the other hand the letter written to Nehemiah was intended for the work of building and repairing the walls of Jerusalem. The letter Nehemiah requested from the king and his appointment as governor of Judah happened in the 20th year of King Artaxerxes (Nehemiah 5:14) So, the temple work was under the supervision of Priest Ezra, Jerusalem's gates and its walls were repaired under the supervision of Governor Nehemiah.

But King Artaxerxes nullified his own decree. He did not remain faithful to his word. Under his command the rebuilding of the temple was forcefully stopped. It happened when Jerusalem's walls had been repaired. This happened when Israel's fierce enemies Rehum the chancellor and Shimshai the scribe wrote a letter to Artaxerxes, in which they spoke against Jerusalem (Ezra 4:8).

After having received the accusative letter, Artaxerxes commanded that search be made in the palace's files for previous trouble from Judah, then he wrote back to Rehum a royal letter in which he acceded to their schemes and annulled his original decree. He treated the matter hastily and unreasonably. He told them that in the records it is found that Jerusalem had been guilty of insurrection, rebellion and sedition

(Ezra 4:19). Then Artaxerxes proceeded to abolish his own decree and commanded “to cause these men to cease, and that this city be not builded, until another commandment shall be given from me” (Ezra 4:21). Thus, he commanded that work on the temple cease immediately. Artaxerxes died but he never lifted up his sanctions against Jerusalem.

Bear in mind that the temple began to be built long before the breaches on the walls of Jerusalem were repaired. Moreover, that the decree to rebuild the temple should be vetoed had been prophesied two hundred and seventy five years earlier by the prophet Micah (Micah 1:1). So when Artaxerxes nullified his own decree, the prophecy of Micah was fulfilled, as he wrote:

“In the day that thy walls are to be built, in that day shall the decree be far removed” (Micah 7:11).

The verb removed is in its original Hebrew form: “râchaq רָחַק , a primitive root; to widen (in any direction), that is, (intransitively) recede or (transitively) remove (literally or figuratively, of place or relation” (Mickelson’s Enhanced Strong’s Greek and Hebrew Dictionaries).

CHAPTER TWELVE

ISRAEL: OUT OF BABYLON

Haggai Prophecies on Behalf of the Temple in 3745 A.M.

In the second year of King Darius the Persian, which corresponds to the chronological year 3745, the Prophet Haggai received word from God and came to address Zerubbabel the Governor of Judah, and Joshua the High Priest (Haggai 1:1). At that time the Jewish people were arguing that the fulfillment of the prophecy to finish rebuilding the temple had not yet come (Haggai 1:2). But the prophetic time had come for finishing the temple. Therefore, Haggai called the attention of these two dignitaries to the unbelief of the people of Israel. Haggai encouraged Judah's Governor Zerubbabel and Jerusalem's High Priest Joshua to examine the prophecies and learn that the house of the Lord should be finished at the time appointed by God:

“Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the LORD” (Haggai 1:8).

Therefore, both Zerubbabel and Joshua, together with the remnant of the people obeyed the voice of the Lord their God through Haggai (Haggai 1:12). They feared before the Lord and, together with the people, were stirred to resume their task of finishing the work in the house of the Lord (Haggai 1:14). The resumption of the work in the temple took place on the 24th day of the sixth month in the second year of King Darius (Haggai 1:15).

One month later, as the work in the temple was once again resumed by the faithful Israelites (Haggai 2:1); Haggai addressed Zerubbabel and Joshua once again with the question: “Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? and how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?” (Haggai 2:3). Obviously there were some elderly people among them who had seen the glory of the first temple, the temple of Solomon. On that occasion Haggai prophesied:

“Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts” (Haggai 2:6-7).

This beautiful prophecy was uttered by Haggai regarding the coming of God Almighty, the Prince of Peace; the Lord Jesus Who would enter through the gates of the second Jewish temple. The prophet wrote:

“The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the LORD of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the LORD of hosts” (Haggai 2:9).

God Commands the Rest of His People to Leave Babylon in 3745 A.M.

Zechariah also prophesied that the time for finishing the work in the house of the Lord had fully come. He began his ministry a few months after Haggai in 3745, particularly in the 8th month of the second year of King Darius the Persian (Zechariah 1:1). The word of the Lord in the mouth of Zechariah was a rebuke for Israel's incredulity and also an encouragement for them to obey the Lord (Zech 1:3). Then again on the 24th day of the 11th month in the second year of Darius (Zechariah 1:7) Zechariah urged Israel to search the prophecies, and proclaimed: "Thus saith the Lord: I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies: my house shall be built in it..." (Zechariah 1:16).

The temple prefigured an eternal emblem of God's salvation for the people of Israel. Therefore, Zechariah compelled his fellow Jews with the following message: "Come forth and flee from the land of the north" (Zechariah 2:6). And yet again he said: "deliver thyself, that dwellest with the daughter of Babylon" (Zechariah 2: 7).

Prophecy of the Candlestick Prefigures 49 Years

The time had fully come for the temple to be finished. God's holy prophets had announced that it would take forty nine years for the house of the Lord to be built. And it was ratified by one of the greatest visions given to Zechariah (Zechariah 4:1). Zechariah was in bed when the angel asked the prophet to tell him what he saw. Zechariah answered him saying that he saw a candlestick of pure gold with a bowl on top of it, it had seven lamps and seven pipes to the seven lamps (Zechariah 4:2). He also saw two olive trees, one on each side of the candlestick (Zechariah 4:3). The prophet was not aware that the vision meant that the temple should be built in 49 years. Zechariah was very eager to know what the interpretation of the vision was, so he asked what are these, my lord? (Zechariah 4:4). The angel expected Zechariah to know what the two olive trees represent. Therefore, the angel answered him with a question: "knowest thou not what these be?" "No, my lord," Zechariah answered (Zechariah 4:5).

"Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, this is the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts" Zechariah 4:6.

Now, therefore, the two olive trees in the vision of Zechariah signify the Word of God. For the end-time remnant of God, this is the Old Testament and the New Testament. But in the days of Zechariah it was the Word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel (Zechariah 4:6), which for the Hebrews was the Law and the Prophets. Accordingly, the prophet and his contemporaries were presented with one of the mysteries of the Kingdom of God, so that the honest searchers of truth could understand the prophecies. The seven lamps and seven pipes (Zechariah 4:2) in the vision represent 49 years. Multiply seven by seven to understand that the temple was to be built in 49 years. The Word of God revealed that Zerubbabel shall oversee the temple work for the span of forty nine years.

$$7 \times 7 = 49.$$

What an honour for one of God's faithful men, Zerubbabel, the builder in chief of the house of the Lord. The angel continued with the explanation of Zechariah's vision:

“Who art thou, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain: and he shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it” (Zechariah 4:7).

But not just the headstone, Zerubbabel was to be the second temple’s builder for the whole span of 49 years. The Word of the Lord made this clear to the prophet, when he said:

“The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it; and thou shalt know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto you” (Zechariah 4:9).

Jubilee: a Symbol of Judgment

Another statute of judgment instituted by God was that of the Jubilee (Leviticus 25: 18). It was intended that Israel should be purged of the degrading wickedness of oppression, the sinful act of great monopolies in control of goods. God therefore commanded: “ye shall not oppress one another” (Leviticus 25:14). Moreover, He commanded: “ye shall grant redemption for the land” (Leviticus 25:24). That redemption of the land consisted in returning every man to his possession in the year of the Jubilee (Leviticus 25:13). Consequently, every year of Jubilee the land was released from mortgage and also the mortgagees were set free to return to their properties.

Jubilee served the purpose of converting the Israelites into the image of God, so that God’s people should administer justice and judgment in Israel. It was celebrated in connection with the Day of Atonement or Day of Judgment. The Holy Scriptures reveal that on the very day of atonement, in the tenth day of the seventh month, they sounded the trumpet of the Jubilee (Leviticus 25:9).

The span of time that was counted to celebrate freedom and redemption through the Jubilee was as follows:

“And thou shalt number seven sabbaths of years unto thee, seven times seven years; and the space of the seven sabbaths of years shall be unto thee forty and nine years” (Leviticus 25:8).

The fiftieth year was named the year of Jubilee (Leviticus 25:11); it was the following year after the Day of Atonement celebration in the forty-ninth year. Therefore, the Lord commanded: ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants (Leviticus 25:10). It was counted as seven sabbaths of years, that is, seven weeks of years; which in this case would result in 49 years; which was the same span for the building of the second temple.

God intended that through the meaning of the Jubilee Israel should see a type of the Messiah, Who was their redeemer. And it was necessary that the building of the second temple and the celebration of the Jubilee should coincide so that the Messiah should be represented as their place of refuge and their Redeemer. Because the Jubilee conveyed the message that in Him we have redemption, it was necessary that the second temple should be completed forty nine years after their liberation from Babylonian captivity in the year of Jubilee.

The Prophet Hosea began his prophetic ministry in the reign of Kings Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah (Hos. 1:1); he was contemporary of Isaiah from the year 3458 to 3519. Hosea told Israel that God will cease their feast days, new moons, Sabbaths and all their solemn feasts (Hosea 2:11). This

prophecy was fulfilled a century later when the prophet Jeremiah exclaimed: “The Lord has caused the solemn feasts and Sabbaths to be forgotten in Zion, and hath despised in the indignation of his anger the king and the priest” (Lamentations 2:6). “The Lord has cast off his altar, he has abhorred his sanctuary” (Lamentations 6:7).

But the completion of the temple was not going to take place until the Jews should experience a spiritual reform and acknowledge that they needed to change their attitude towards the oppressed poor. Through the Jubilee, God had envisioned a prophecy that had to do with liberating Israel from all vestiges of oppression. It was due to their oppressive systems that the Jews had been punished and taken captives to Babylon. It was therefore necessary that Israel be purged of national apostasy and oppression. The temple and Jerusalem had already undergone 70 years of desolation, yet the people of Israel still had to learn another lesson. Therefore, the completion work of the temple was going to take 49 years, which are the seven sabbaths of years until the celebration of the Jubilee. They had been released from their temporal captivity, but not from their spiritual enslavement, that is, from their oppressive way of thinking.

Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Nehemiah Against Corruption

Israel’s corruption was intensifying as they continued falling into idolatry. Then God sent the prophet Isaiah, the son of Amoz in the days of Kings Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah (Isaiah 1:1). He prophesied from the year 3458 to 3519. Isaiah’s message conveyed God’s disillusionment with regards to Israel’s fallen state of immorality; so God raised the question: “What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?” (Isaiah 5:4). Then He forewarned: “I will lay it waste” (Isaiah 5:6). Isaiah explained that the vineyard is the house of Israel, where God “looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry” (Isaiah 5:7). And the message was against the immoral monopolization, where a few magnates held control of the means for food and daily living. Such monopolists in the house of Israel were condemned harshly with a word of retributive judgment: “Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no place, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth! (Isaiah 5:8). Their due punishment was a severe famine because of their wickedness (Isaiah 5:10).

Prior to the Babylonian captivity Israel’s moral decadence had peaked as corruption had invaded all institutions of society, even the very priesthood. God sent Jeremiah from the 13th year of King Josiah to the 11th year of King Zedekiah (Jeremiah 1:2-3). Thus, for the span of 41 years, from the year 3589 to 3630, that faithful prophet warned Israel of the impending judgment to punish their wickedness. His message was against Jerusalem; as he said: “this is the city to be visited; she is wholly oppression in the midst of her” (Jeremiah 6:6). Jeremiah also pronounced Israel’s wretchedness as their condition was ripe for God’s retributive judgments. He said: “Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness and his chambers by wrong; that useth his neighbour’s service without wages, and giveth him not for his work” (Jeremiah 22:13). So degraded was Israel’s spiritual condition that the whole nation was sold to greed and dishonesty; even the prophets and priests were profane and their wickedness was found inside the temple (Jeremiah 23:11). Jeremiah therefore, disclosed their wickedness:

“For from the least of them even unto the greatest of them every one is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely” (Jeremiah 6:13).

From the midst of Babylon God also raised Ezekiel the prophet who reproved Israel's wickedness for having oppressed the stranger (Ezekiel 22:7). Israel had a spiritual problem, they committed lewdness (Ezekiel 22:9). Many of their people were accustomed to take usury, which they had greedily exacted from their neighbours by extortion (Ezekiel 22:12). There was a conspiracy by false prophets who coveted the sustenance of the widows in Jerusalem (Ezekiel 22:25). Likewise the priests violated God's law and profaned His holy things (Ezekiel 22:26). Jerusalem's princes were ready to destroy souls and shed blood, to gain dishonest gain (Ezekiel 22:27). And the nation as a whole used oppression and exercised robbery and vexed the poor and needy (Ezekiel 22:29). But God was purging Israel of all their wickedness. Ezekiel proclaimed: "My princes shall no more oppress my people" (Ezekiel 45:8). Then the counsel was readily given: "O princes of Israel: remove violence and spoil, and execute judgment and justice, take away your exactions from my people, saith the Lord" (Ezekiel 45:9). And the command was delivered to all classes of society: "Ye shall have just balances..." (Ezekiel 45:10). God's reproach was directly to the priests who had for a long time used extortion and robbed the people of their sustenance (Ezekiel 45:13-14).

The Jubilee was coming in 3749; this was a most significant celebration because it also concurred with the dedication of the second Jewish temple. But the Jews should rid of their oppressive lifestyle. It wasn't long after the Jews returned from Babylon that they returned to their old habit of oppression. The word of God came to Judah's Governor Nehemiah prior to the completion of the temple work. Nehemiah was shocked by the exactions that were imposed by the more powerful in Jerusalem. Complaints were addressed to the Governor revealing their sorrowful condition. "We have mortgaged our lands, vineyards, and houses so that we buy corn" they complained (Nehemiah 5:4). Some of the peoples' complaints were that they had to borrow money for the king's tribute (Nehemiah 5: 4). Others had been driven to extreme poverty to the extent of selling their children as slaves, whom they had no means of redeeming because their lands were in the hands of different landowners (Nehemiah 5:5). Then Nehemiah appealed to their consciences and protested against their conduct. He recalled their recent exile experience in Babylon, and how they had been released from captivity, and yet the Jews were continuing to oppress their own people (Nehemiah 5:8-9). Therefore, the Governor said: "I pray you, let us leave off this usury" (Nehemiah 5:10). Nehemiah finished his speech by pleading with Israel to restore on that very day, all the lands, vineyards, olive yards, and houses; plus a hundred per cent of the money, corn, wine and oil that they had exacted from them (Nehemiah 5:11). And the people responded positively, as they said: "We will restore to them and will require nothing of them." (Nehemiah 5:12). Thus, on that day, the people of God won the victory over their enemy; the love of money!

Second Jewish Temple Finished in 3749 A.M.

The people had finally understood God's providence in King Cyrus' decree to rebuild the temple. The prophecy indicated that it would take 49 years to re-build it. Therefore, the seven weeks of Daniel 9:25 is a reminder of the counting of seven Sabbaths of years in Leviticus 25:8. Both accounts would indicate that a great celebration of the Jubilee took place at the opening ceremony of the second Jewish temple. After 49 years, Israel was ready to celebrate their Jubilee of liberation from Babylonian captivity. But more importantly, theirs was a Jubilee of liberation from selfish oppression of one another. What else could bring greater joy than the completion of the house of the Lord culminating in Israel's spiritual reform as urged by the prophets of the Lord?

Centuries later, when the Lord Jesus entered that temple, He rebuked the changers of money and expelled the merchants of oxen, sheep and doves together with their stock (John 2:14). As he drove them out with a scourge (John 2:15) He told them: “make not my Father's house an house of merchandise” (John 2:16). The puzzled Jews asked Jesus for a sign in regard to His authority for having cleansed the temple in such a dramatic way (John 2:18). The Lord Jesus replied to them: “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up” (John 2:19). They misunderstood Him, but He spoke of the temple of His body (John 2:21). However, the Jews tried to correct the Lord in regards to His knowledge about Israel’s history, they said: “Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days?” (John 2:20).

Of course the cunning Jews were wrong even in their historical data. They erred as they relied on their traditions and apocryphal books and did not search the Law and the Prophets for authentic historical data. The Scriptures clearly reveal that King Cyrus issued his decree in the first year of his reign (2 Chronicles 36: 22 Ezra 1:1), which was the year 3700. Although Cyrus had released Israel from captivity and given them permission to rebuild the temple at Jerusalem, they did not lay the foundation stone nor begin working in the building of the second temple until the second year of their return to Jerusalem (Ezra 3:8). Technically the temple work began from the moment that the Israelites carried building materials from Babylon to Jerusalem. Here we gain one more year.

Another matter to consider is that there were at least two years when work ceased because the fickle Artaxerxes abolished his own decree. Notice that when Artaxerxes declared sanctions on Jerusalem, he commanded that the city be not built until another commandment shall be given from him (Ezra 4:21). At the writing of Artaxerxes’ abolition of his own decree the arch-enemies of Israel compelled the Jews to stop building the temple as well as the city walls. Thus the work was stopped until the second year of the reign of Darius King of Persia (Ezra 4:24). Here we have the last year of Artaxerxes when he abolished the permit for building the temple and the first year of Darius who had not yet reopened the construction permit until his second year in power (Haggai 1:15). Therefore, we conclude that the stoppage time for building the second temple was three years but the finishing work and dedication happened at the end of 49 years.

The Word of God declares that “to do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice” (Proverbs 21:3). Forty nine years had elapsed since the day when King Cyrus had issued the decree to rebuild the house of the Lord. Justice and mercy had prevailed; the people of God had been granted deliverance in the name of the Lord. The temple work was finished and the temple inaugurated in the year 3749; Ezra wrote that historical date as follows:

“And this house was finished on the third day of the month Adar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king. And the children of Israel, the priests, and the Levites, and the rest of the children of the captivity, kept the dedication of this house of God with joy” (Ezra 6:15 -16).

Bear in mind that there were two Kings named Darius. Darius the Median who took the kingdom (Daniel 5: 31; Daniel 9:1; Daniel 11:1) after Cyrus had conquered Babylon, this Darius died in the same year of his reign and Cyrus the Persian took over the kingdom. In the Medo-Persian Empire reigned yet another Darius, he is called Darius the Persian, he ordered the completion of the temple at Jerusalem (Ezra 4:5; 4:24; 6:15; Nehemiah 12:22).

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

CHRONOLOGY OF THE EXILE AND RESTORATION

Introduction

The chronology of the historical books included in this chapter embraces the Babylonian exile and the restoration—that is, from the reign of Nebuchadnezzar in the Neo-Babylonian Empire to that of Darius II in the Persian Empire that followed it. In this period, more than in any other, the Bible narrative can be aligned with the sequence of historical events and with the ebb and flow of political, religious, and social forces in the Near East. This is possible because modern archaeologists have unearthed many monumental inscriptions and thousands of public and private documents. The latter were written mostly on clay tablets in Mesopotamia, with a smaller number on papyri in Egypt, some of which were found still rolled up and sealed.

These ancient original documents include contracts, deeds, other legal papers, letters, receipts, literary, historical, or religious texts, decrees, and diplomatic correspondence, written by professional scribes, but mostly relating to individuals. They furnish significant details about property, debts, wages, taxes, and the cost of living. They throw light on social customs—slavery, marriage, divorce—and occasionally reveal unexpected items of human interest. A mere inventory of personal property draws a vivid picture of a bride's trousseau—her new dresses, one flounced, another striped, and so on—complete with her wicker clothes chest, her bronze mirror and bowls, and her little pots of cosmetics. A series of dated receipts tells a story of graft at the capital. And the date lines, in terms of the numbered years of many successive kings, are of prime importance in dating the reigns.

These ancient documents have piled up in museum storerooms faster than they can be translated and published. For example, the Brooklyn Museum Papyri, acquired more than 50 years before they were published in 1953, furnish a link in the chain of evidence for the Jewish calendar after the Exile, hence for the dating of Ezra and Nehemiah, and thus of the decree of Artaxerxes “to restore and to build Jerusalem,” on which two important time prophecies hinge.

In Ezra and Nehemiah, in Jeremiah and Daniel, in Haggai and Zechariah, are numerous dates in terms of the years of certain kings in the Neo-Babylonian and Persian empires. These dates can be located with a greater degree of certainty than those of any preceding or subsequent period of Bible history, and some of them are connected with important events such as the fall of Jerusalem, or prophecies such as the 70-year captivity or the 70 weeks.

Many events of the captivity and restoration of the Jews can be dated with certainty to the year, and often to the day—allowing always for the possibility of a day's variation in the calculation of a lunar-calendar date, and sometimes of a month in case of uncertainty as to which year had the 13th month. Therefore in the previous section, exact B.C. dates are sometimes given, with the high probability that they are correct to the day. The Babylonian month dates are derived from Parker and Dubberstein, *Babylonian Chronology*, and the 5th century Jewish dates from the tabulation by Horn and Wood. In some cases there

is room for difference of opinion. For this reason a discussion of the means of arriving at these dates, and of the probable degree of certainty, is desirable. It is the purpose of this chapter to explain the dating employed in the previous section. The second section of this chapter will show how the archeological source documents provide the basis for a relatively complete B.C. dating of these reigns. Then a following section will take up the specific problems of Biblical chronology for this period.

Chronological Background of the Period Established

Ptolemy's Canon - The reigns of Babylonian and Persian kings during the captivity-restoration period are well established by numerous source documents. Most of these have come to light in recent decades. But formerly scholars depended on the canon, or list, of kings compiled by the Egyptian astronomer Ptolemy in the 2nd century A.D. Ptolemy's Canon gives the lengths of the successive reigns of Babylonian, Persian, Macedonian-Egyptian, and Roman rulers from February 26, 747 B.C., to Ptolemy's day, reckoned in Egyptian years. This scale of Egyptian calendar years has been definitely fixed by a series of eclipses mentioned by Ptolemy in his astronomical work known as The Almagest—eclipses dated to the day and hour in the Egyptian-calendar reckoning and identified with specific B.C. dates by modern astronomers.

NOTE: The question may be raised as to why Ptolemy's eclipses can be dated so confidently, since the eclipse on which the Assyrian limmu list hinges has been assigned to more than one possible date. The reason is that the Assyrian record gives only the lunar month, while Ptolemy records 19 eclipses, dated to the day and hour, with the intervals between the eclipses stated precisely, in an Egyptian calendar era. A full moon (at which a lunar eclipse must always occur) falls on the same date in our calendar only once in 19 years; and in Ptolemy's Egyptian calendar, with its gradual backward shift, a full-moon date can recur only after 25 years. Since only twice out of 12 or 13 full-moon dates in a year can the moon be eclipsed, the possibility of duplication is reduced still further. That is why there can be no doubt about Ptolemy's eclipse dates.

Ptolemy's Canon was derived from ancient records, and was subsequently recopied many times before it became available to modern scholars. Therefore some chronologists of a century or two ago felt free to revise the canon dating according to their theories. But in recent times Ptolemy's accuracy has been increasingly confirmed by documents much more ancient than the canon, and free from the accumulated small errors so often found in recopied manuscripts.

Babylonian Tablets Outline the Reigns - Since the birth of modern archeology, the gradually accumulating information derived from the Babylonian clay tablets has pieced together a pattern not only of the historical background but also of the chronology of the period. However trivial the contents of these documents, the date lines of a series of them, when arranged in time order, show approximately the time of the year at which each king came to the throne.

For example, if all the known tablets written during a series of reigns are arranged in time order, it will be noticed that the latest dated in one reign and the earliest in the succeeding reign are very close together, sometimes on the same day. A series of tablets might be compiled thus:

	Year	Month	Day
Nebuchadnezzar (43yrs)	43	6	14

“	43	6	26
Amel-Marduk (2yrs)	<i>“beginning of reign”</i>	6	26
“	“ “ “	7	19
“	1	2	1
“	1	11	18
“	2	3	15
“	2	5	17
Nergal–shar–usur	<i>“beginning of reign”</i>	5	23
“	“ “ “	6	12 etc.

The italicized dates show that the first tablet in the reign of Amel-Marduk (Biblical Evil-merodach) is dated the 26th of the 6th month, the same day as the last dated in the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, and that the last dated to Amel-Marduk, on the 17th of the 5th month of his 2nd year, is followed in less than a week, on the 23rd of the 5th month, by a tablet dated in the reign of his successor. Thus the length of his rule is known almost exactly. The series is similar for other reigns, with the earliest tablets in the “beginning of the reign” coming in the last part of the year that had begun as the last numbered year of the preceding king. Occasionally the tablet dates overlap, because documents written in distant villages were still dated in the old reign until news of the king’s death arrived, while scribes in the capital were using the new king’s name.

The series of earliest and latest tablets, whenever available, corroborates the lengths of the Babylonian and Persian reigns as given in Ptolemy’s Canon, and points out approximately the month and day of the new king’s accession. Dated tablets also show that the remaining portion of the last calendar year of the old king, between the change of reign and the next New Year’s Day (Nisan 1, in the spring) was called the “beginning of the reign,” or, as modern translators put it, “accession year,” while “year 1” was the first full calendar year.

NOTE: The Jewish-Egyptian papyri from Egypt similarly harmonize with Ptolemy’s Canon and show that the Jews used the accession-year system also; but they indicate that the Egyptians called the remainder of the (Egyptian) year in which the accession took place “year 1,” not the “beginning of reign,” or “accession year”

Series of Tablets Give Relative Chronology - The tablets of this type (or the similar papyri from Egypt) supply only relative chronology. The whole series of Babylonian regnal years remains on a sliding scale in relation to the B.C. scale until we have some established B.C. dating on which to anchor the series. Ptolemy’s Canon and his eclipse records fix the B.C. dating of the years of the Egyptian calendar, not that of Babylonian. Although the incomplete series of relatively dated Babylonian tablets seems to agree with Ptolemy, they are not conclusive, because they are dated in a different calendar, and are sometimes subject to varying interpretations. The Saros Tablets (from the Seleucid period) contain a list of regnal

years, 18 years apart in the saros cycle. These regnal years harmonize with Ptolemy and with the dated tablets as to the lengths of the reigns, but do not independently fix any B.C. date. But two tablets have furnished a check on Ptolemy's Canon and offer definite, contemporary evidence for the B.C. equivalents of the Babylonian years. These will be discussed next.

Two Astronomical Tablets Fix Babylonian Dating - Of unique value are two independent tablets—contemporary texts, each giving astronomical data covering a whole year. The first of these, from the 37th year of Nebuchadnezzar, contains a series of observations from Nisan 1 (Babylonian New Year's Day), year 37, through Nisan 1, year 38. The date for a single observation might be suspected of error, but modern astronomers tell us that a combination of records such as that appearing on this tablet, relating to the positions, of sun, moon, and planets, all of which move in differing cycles, can be located exactly in only one year. Nebuchadnezzar's 37th year was beyond doubt the Babylonian lunar-calendar year extending from April 23, 568 B.C. (to be exact, April 22/23, sundown to sundown) through April 12, 567 B.C. This of course places the 1st official year (that is, the first full year) of Nebuchadnezzar at 604/03 B.C., spring to spring, and similarly fixes all the years of his reign.

The second text of this kind contains a similar series of calculated astronomical data (proved correct by modern computation) fixing the 7th year of Cambyses as the Babylonian calendar year April 7, 523, to March 26, 522 B.C. (The Persian rulers, as kings of Babylon also, adopted the Babylonian calendar.) This tablet of Cambyses' reign is particularly interesting because among other data it records an eclipse (calculated to have occurred on July 16, 523 B.C.) that is identical with one dated by Ptolemy in the same 7th year. Thus both ancient dating scales—the Egyptian solar years of Ptolemy and the Babylonian-Persian lunar years—are aligned with a fixed point in the B.C. scale and with each other.

Alignment of Egyptian and Babylonian Years - This eclipse establishes the alignment of Ptolemy's Egyptian years with the corresponding Babylonian years. Ptolemy began the 1st year of Cambyses by the Egyptian calendar on Thoth 1, January 3, 529 B.C., approximately three months before Cambyses' 1st year began in the Babylonian calendar. Other source evidence shows that throughout this period any given year of any reign began, similarly, three to four months earlier in the Egyptian calendar than the same year in the Babylonian-Persian reckoning. The interval became progressively longer, because the Babylonian year always began following a new moon of March or April, while the Egyptian year had a gradual backward shift.

Double-dated Papyri From Egypt Yield Exact Dates - A contemporary check on the B.C. dating of the Persian reigns during the greater part of the 5th century B.C. is furnished by numerous documents written on papyrus in the Aramaic language and found at the Jewish settlement on the island of Elephantine, in southern Egypt. Fourteen out of approximately one hundred of these are double-dated, carrying an Egyptian (solar) month date and a Jewish (lunar) month date, and in some cases two regnal year numbers differing in the two calendars. These double dates can be located in the B.C. scale within range of a single day.

NOTE: The method of arriving at the date of one of the Elephantine papyri can best be explained by an example (Papyrus 6 in the Brooklyn Museum collection published in 1953). A Jewish father's gift of (part of?) a house to his daughter, who was to be married, was dated "on the 8th of Pharmuthi, which is the 8th day of Tammuz, year 3 of Darius" (II). Since Egypt was part of the Persian Empire at that time, the year was designated as numbered in the reign of the Persian ruler, but Pharmuti 8 is an Egyptian month date. The various nationalities in the empire retained their own calendars, and in this case the Jewish colonists

at Elephantine used two calendars, the Jewish (lunar) and the Egyptian (solar). The problem is to find the year in which the 8th of the lunar month Tammuz happens to correspond to the 8th of the Egyptian month of Pharmuthi.

Since the Egyptians had a 365-day year, and no leap years, any Egyptian calendar date shifted a day earlier every four years by our reckoning. Consequently the Egyptian New Year's Day (Thoth 1), which came on what we call February 26 at the starting point of Ptolemy's Canon, had shifted back to January in the time of Nebuchadnezzar, and had moved into December in the reign of Darius I. The Egyptian years for this period are known from Ptolemy's Canon and eclipse data; Pharmuthi 8 in the reign of Darius II was July, corresponding closely to the lunar month of Tammuz, which always began in June or July. But in only one year could Pharmuthi 8 be also Tammuz 8, since any Egyptian date moves one day in four years, but any lunar date shifts at least 10 or 11 days a year in our reckoning. The following table shows that the only possible year for this papyrus was 420 B.C.:

	Year B.C.	Pharmuthi 8	Tammuz 8
	422	July 12/13 (sunrise to sunrise)	July 4/5 (sunset to sunset)
	421	July 11/12 (sunrise to sunrise)	July 22/23 (sunset to sunset)
>	420	July 11/12 (sunrise to sunrise)	July 11/12 (sunset to sunset)
	419	July 11/12 (sunrise to sunrise)	July 1/2 (sunset to sunset)
	418	July 11/12 (sunrise to sunrise)	July 20/21 (sunset to sunset)
	417	July 10/11 (sunrise to sunrise)	July 8/9 (sunset to sunset)

Since Pharmuthi 8 and Tammuz 8 can be harmonized only in 420 B.C., this is evidently the year in which the papyrus was written. This was the year 3 in the Jewish fall-to-fall calendar. Ordinarily the year given on a papyrus is the Egyptian year, but in this case the date does not fit either the Egyptian or the Persian year 3, which covered the summer of 421 instead. Similarly in other double-dated papyri the Egyptian month date is possible in four consecutive years, but the lunar date can agree with the Egyptian in only one of these years. Thus the B.C. dates of these papyri can be determined.

These papyri are in complete harmony with the pattern indicated by the other chronological information on these reigns. Their Egyptian dating, agreeing with Ptolemy's regnal years, shows that Ptolemy's Canon was based on contemporary Egyptian reckoning. Their Jewish dates, reckoned by the accession-year system, harmonize with the Babylonian-Persian numbering, but not the beginning, of the years, for one of the papyri shows clearly that these Jews were using their own fall-to-fall civil year, not the spring-to-spring Babylonian year.

Thus by the two astronomically fixed years (the 37th of Nebuchadnezzar and the 7th of Cambyses), and by the double-dated papyri from Egypt, the regnal years of six of the Babylonian and Persian kings are positively known on contemporary evidence. Ptolemy's eclipses add two more reigns that are apparently in harmony with these six. If the lengths of the other reigns as we have them are correct (and the evidence on these—from Ptolemy's Canon, the Saros Tablets, and the series of dated tablets from Babylonia—seems to harmonize), then we can be certain of the B.C. equivalent of every regnal year of every Babylonian and Persian king throughout the period covered in this chapter, as reckoned in both the Egyptian solar and the Babylonian lunar calendars.

How to Locate a B.C. Dating of a Regnal Year - The reader who desires to locate any given Babylonian or Persian regnal year may refer to the table of Ptolemy's Canon. The B.C. dates given in the two

supplementary columns at the right indicate the beginning of the official 1st year of each reign according to the Egyptian calendar (except that Ptolemy leaves out those kings who ruled less than a year, such as Labashi-Marduk, who followed Nergal-sharusur). From the year 1, any other year in the reign can be calculated to the day by computing years of exactly 365 days each, with no leap year. Throughout this period each Babylonian-Persian regnal year (in the Babylonian calendar) began on the next Nisan 1 after the corresponding Egyptian New Year; it always began after a new moon of late March or April. Thus the 1st year of Xerxes in the Egyptian calendar was 486/85 B.C. (beginning in December), but his year 1 in Babylonia was 485/84 B.C., spring to spring, while the corresponding Jewish year for Xerxes would presumably begin last of all, in the autumn of 485 (Tishri 1, following a new moon of late September to late October). But this Jewish sequence is not consistent. In some reigns the Jewish year would precede the corresponding Babylonian year by six months, while in others it would follow, depending on which New Year's Day—Babylonian or Jewish—arrived first after the date of accession to usher in the 1st year of the reign.

NOTE: There is no reason to doubt that Jewish mode of regnal reckoning was the accession-year system, since that method seems to have been in use in the late period of Judah, shortly before the Exile, and is indicated for the only Jewish-calendar evidence in the Persian period, the double-dated papyri. If that system is applied to each king's date of accession in this period, as derived from the various source materials, the result will be the following alignment of the Jewish regnal years with the Babylonian regnal years carrying the same number:

1. The Jewish year would begin in the autumn preceding the corresponding Babylonian spring year in the reigns of the Babylonian kings (Nebuchadnezzar through Nabonidus), and also of the Persian king Cambyses.

2. The Jewish year would begin in the autumn following the corresponding Babylonian year in the reigns of the Persian kings (Cyrus through Darius II) except Cambyses.

Before Nabopolassar and after Darius II there is insufficient evidence from the tablets to fix the date of accession. The reigns of less than one year are not relevant.

This section has summarized the established basis on which any date in this period that is expressed in terms of regnal years can be computed. On the Egyptian and Babylonian-Persian dating scholars in general are agreed; the only room for variance of opinion is a difference in certain dates as calculated in the Babylonian spring-to-spring year and the Jewish fall-to-fall civil year. This difference will be discussed in the following sections of this chapter in connection with specific Biblical dates relating to the captivity and restoration of the Jews.

Beginning of the Captivity Under Nebuchadnezzar

The book of 2 Chronicles ends, and Ezra begins, with the narrative of the return of the Jews to Palestine from 70 years' captivity in Babylonia. The first chronological problem of this chapter, therefore, is the dating of the Exile.

The 70 Years Predicted by Jeremiah - The 70 years' captivity has generally been accepted as beginning with the first deportation of Jews to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar, and as ending with the return of a large group of the exiles under Zerubbabel, authorized by a decree of Cyrus in his 1st regnal year. The period has often been dated 606-536 B.C. Since an ancient lunar year cannot coincide with a Julian-calendar B.C. year beginning with January, ancient years are more accurately expressed in double form, thus: 606/05

B.C., etc. Therefore, to express it more exactly, this 70-year period would be, in the Jewish civil calendar, 606/05-537/36 B.C.

Jeremiah first predicted the 70-year captivity in the 4th year of Jehoiakim, or the 1st year of Nebuchadnezzar (Jeremiah 25:1-11), which was, according to the Jewish civil calendar, 605/04 B.C., from autumn to autumn. However, he still spoke of a 70-year captivity in a letter to the leaders who had been exiled to Babylon along with Jehoiachin seven years after his earlier prophecy (Jeremiah 29:1, 10). It would seem logical, then, to suppose that the prophetic period was reckoned, not from either prediction, but from a specific event, one that most reasonably fulfilled the requirements of the prophecy, namely, the beginning of the captivity. Both of the prophet's predictions evidently referred to the captivity already begun (as will be seen) in the 3rd year of Jehoiakim (Daniel 1:1-6).

The Captivity in Three Stages - The deportation to Babylonia took place in three principal stages, in the reigns of the last three kings of Judah:

(1) in the 3rd year of Jehoiakim, when some of the Temple treasures and a number of captives, including Daniel, were taken to Babylon (Daniel 1:1-3);

(2) at the end of the three-month reign of Jehoiachin, in the 8th year of Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kings 24:8-16), when Jehoiachin, with others including Ezekiel, was taken captive (Ezekiel 1:1-3; 33:21; 40:1); and

(3) in the 11th year of Zedekiah, the 19th year of Nebuchadnezzar, when Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed and the larger portion of the remaining inhabitants were deported to Babylonia (2 Kings 25:8-21).

Since Nebuchadnezzar's reign is fixed astronomically, these three stages can be dated at 605, 597, and 586 respectively.

First Stage at Nebuchadnezzar's Accession - The beginning of the captivity came in Nebuchadnezzar's accession year, before his year 1, for:

(1) the 3rd year of Jehoiakim was the year in which Nebuchadnezzar came against Judah and took Daniel captive (Daniel 1:1-3, 6); and

(2) the 4th year of Jehoiakim was the 1st of Nebuchadnezzar (Jeremiah 25:1).

Corroborating this are (a) the record of Josephus (Against Apion i. 19), derived from that of the Babylonian historian Berosus, that Nebuchadnezzar was on a military campaign to Palestine and Egypt when suddenly called home to take the throne at the death of his father, Nabopolassar, and that he left captives, including Jews, to be brought home by the army; and (b) the Babylonian Chronicle tablet that dates his father's death on Ab 8 (approximately August 15 in 605) and Nebuchadnezzar's accession in Babylon on Elul 1 (approximately September 7).

Accordingly, Nebuchadnezzar's official 1st year would begin in Babylonia at the next New Year's Day, in the spring of 604 B.C. According to the Jewish reckoning, however, by the fall-to-fall civil year, it would be counted as beginning at the next Jewish New Year after the accession, about October, 605, not long after the first deportation. The prophecy of Jeremiah could have come very soon after, in the 4th year of Jehoiakim. Everyone would naturally have understood his 70-year prediction as referring to the

captivity that had just begun. This date for the captivity, the 3rd year of Jehoiakim, 605 B.C., is in complete harmony with the dating of Nebuchadnezzar's accession, and with the return of the exiles at the end of 70 years, inclusive.

The Older Theory of Nebuchadnezzar's Supposed co-regency - Earlier commentators reached a different date in their attempt to account for (1) "Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon" taking Daniel captive in the 3rd year of Jehoiakim before the 1st year of his reign (the 4th year of Jehoiakim); (2) Daniel's three years of training (Daniel 1:5) before the 2nd year of Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 2:1, 13); and (3) 70 years between the 1st year of Nebuchadnezzar and the 1st year of Cyrus (which Ptolemy placed in 604 and 538 B.C. respectively).

In seeking to solve these apparent discrepancies, Bible scholars equated Jehoiakim's 4th year with 606 as the 1st year of a conjectured 2-year co regency of Nebuchadnezzar with his father; (See NOTE) they assigned Nebuchadnezzar's dream to the 2nd year of his sole reign, with three years in between for Daniel's schooling; and they reckoned the 70 years from 606 to 536, to which they adjusted the 1st year of Cyrus. Eventually this explanation came to be taken for granted, and to be regarded as established history instead of a learned conjecture.

NOTE: The conjecture that Nebuchadnezzar had a two-year co regency is credited to Petavius (Petau), a 17th-century Jesuit scholar. Petavius also conjectured a co regency of 10 years for Artaxerxes I, in order to begin the 71 weeks with the 20th year of the reign as counted from the beginning of the co regency. Ussher, with a slightly different ending date for the 70 weeks, followed Petavius in shifting Artaxerxes, but he abandoned Ptolemy here and placed Xerxes' death 9 years earlier than the canon date for Artaxerxes' reign. Few Protestant commentators followed this chronology for Artaxerxes, but for more than two centuries the margins of the Douay Bible and tables in the back of many KJV editions carried Ussher's 467 and 454 B.C. for Ezra 7 and Nehemiah 2.

Now, however, the supposed discrepancies in the Bible have vanished completely in the light of the documents unearthed by modern archeology. The account is confirmed as it stands, for it is now known that: (1) Nebuchadnezzar was king for some months before his "first year" began; (2) Daniel's training—if it began in Nebuchadnezzar's accession year, extended through the 1st year, and ended in the 2nd year—would have been counted as lasting three years by the inclusive reckoning commonly used at that time; and (3) the use of the Jewish fall-to-fall civil year makes it possible to reckon the 70 years inclusively from 606/05 to 537/36 B.C. without juggling the reigns.

The Dating of the 70 Years' Captivity - If the first year of the 70-year captivity foretold by Jeremiah was 606/05 B.C., autumn to autumn—the 3rd year of Jehoiakim, in which Daniel and others were taken to Babylon—then the 70th year of that period was 537/36 B.C. It will be seen, furthermore, in Section V that the return of the exiles under Zerubbabel, following the decree of the 1st year of Cyrus, can be assigned reasonably to this year.

Before leaving the period of the beginning of the captivity, however, it is necessary to note the basis for the dating of the second and third steps in the process. This is found in the chronology of Jeremiah, who predicted the 70 years' captivity, and of Ezekiel, who was exiled to Babylonia with Jehoiachin.

The Chronology of Jeremiah and Ezekiel

Dates in Jeremiah and Ezekiel - The prophet Jeremiah began his work in the 13th year of Josiah, approximately 627 B.C. (Jeremiah 25:3), not long before the accession of Nabopolassar, Nebuchadnezzar's father, who was soon to win Babylon's independence from Assyria, to join with the Medes and Scythians to overthrow Assyria, and then to build an empire of his own (known as the Neo-Babylonian Empire). During these international upheavals Jeremiah warned that Judah must repent or fall a prey to foreign powers. In the 4th year of Jehoiakim, "the first year of Nebuchadnezzar," he foretold the 70-year captivity, and many of his messages are dated to the month, day, and regnal year of Jehoiakim or Zedekiah (see Jeremiah 25:1; 26:1; 45:1; 36:9, 10; 28:1; 51:59; 39:1; 32:1). His ministry to Judah ended with the third principal stage of the captivity, at the fall of Jerusalem in 586.

Ezekiel was taken to Babylon with his king, Jehoiachin, in the 8th year of Nebuchadnezzar (see on 2 Kings 24:12; also on 2 Chronicles 36:9, 10), in the second principal stage of the captivity, in the spring of 597 B.C. Then he received his prophetic call in the 5th year of the captivity of Jehoiachin (Ezekiel 1:2), and dated his prophetic messages in years reckoned in era fashion from this captivity (see Ezekiel 1:1, 2; 8:1; 20:1; 24:1; 29:1; 26:1; 30:20; 31:1; 33:21; 32:1; 40:1; 29:17). His chronological reckoning must be considered in connection with that of Jeremiah, who dealt with some of the same events. Seven principal events are tabulated here, dated in years of Jehoiachin's captivity and regnal years of Zedekiah (with B.C. dates as arrived at in the succeeding paragraphs).

Day	Month	Year of Jehoiachin's Captivity	Year of Zedekiah	Event	Text	B.C. Date
1. 10	10	9		Beginning of siege (Ezekiel)	Ezekiel 24:1, 2	Jan 588
2. 10	10		9	Beginning of siege (Jeremiah)	Jeremiah 39:1; 52:4	Jan 588
3. 9	4		11	End of siege; city falls	Jeremiah 39:2	July 586
4. 10	5		11	City and Temple destroyed	Jeremiah 1:3; 52:12	Aug 586
5. 5	10	12		Message reaches Ezekiel	Ezekiel 33:21	Jan 585
6. 10	1? 7?	25		14th yr. from city's fall	Ezekiel 40:1	573/72
7.25	12	37		Jehoiachin released in "the year" of Evil-Merodach	Jeremiah 52:31; cf. 2 Kings 25:27	March 561

The foregoing events from the books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel must be dated consistently with one another; also with Jeremiah's statement (chapter 32:1) synchronizing Zedekiah's 10th year and Nebuchadnezzar's 18th, and with those (Jeremiah 52:5, 12; 2 Kings 25:2, 8) placing the fall and destruction of Jerusalem in the summer of Zedekiah's 11th year and Nebuchadnezzar's 19th. The latter's regnal years, astronomically fixed in the Babylonian spring-to-spring calendar, would begin half a year earlier in the Jewish civil (fall-to-fall) calendar; hence this summer date, in the half year during which the spring and fall years overlapped, would be in year 19 in either calendar, that is, in 586 B.C. (See NOTE) But Jehoiachin's capture, which a Babylonian chronicle dates on Adar 2 in Nebuchadnezzar's 7th year (approximately March 16, 597 B.C.), falls in his year 8 by Jewish count (being in the non-overlapping part of the year).

NOTE: Some modern authorities say 587, holding either (1) that the Bible writers (except in Jeremiah 52:28, 29) numbered Nebuchadnezzar's regnal years one year higher than he himself did by the official Babylonian count, or (2) that the 19th year (2 Kings 25:8 and Jeremiah 52:12) is erroneous and must be corrected to the 18th year by Jeremiah 52:29. But the last-mentioned verse refers only the taking of a few captives not to the fall of Jerusalem; whereas verse 12 of the same chapter makes the Babylonians enter the city in the 19th year, in harmony with 2 Kings. Therefore there is actually no discrepancy, and 586 may be considered established. The question as to whether Jeremiah means to equate the 4th year of Jehoiakim with the accession year or with the 1st year of Nebuchadnezzar (Jeremiah 25:1) is not relevant to the Zedekiah-Nebuchadnezzar synchronisms.

The Various Possibilities Tested - Opinions differ as to (a) whether Jeremiah and Ezekiel counted the years from spring or fall, and (b) whether the "1st year" of Jehoiachin's captivity meant the year in which he was captured or the one beginning next thereafter, but it may be assumed (1) that both writers agree in dating the beginning of the siege, (2) that the news of the city's fall must reach Ezekiel in a reasonable time (in 6 rather than 18 months), and (3) that Jehoiachin's release must fall in either the accession year or the year 1 of Amel-Marduk. A consideration of all possible combinations of the variables (a) and (b), along with the above-mentioned specifications, seems to yield two most probable alternatives.

The B.C. Datings of Jeremiah and Ezekiel - The precise methods of reckoning used by Jeremiah and Ezekiel cannot be absolutely proved on the basis of probability, since what is most probable is not always what actually happened. But the best of the various possible combinations make it most likely that Jeremiah used the fall year and Ezekiel the spring year, although it is almost equally likely that Ezekiel reckoned from the fall as well as Jeremiah. In either case Ezekiel's "1st year of the captivity" would begin in the spring or fall of 597, and Jeremiah's 1st year of Zedekiah in the fall of that year. (See NOTE) On this basis the tabulated dates of the events agree remarkably.

NOTE: Some hold that Jeremiah as well as Ezekiel used the spring-beginning year but that Kings, Daniel and Ezra-Nehemiah used the fall year. There is considerable difference of opinion about Jeremiah.

The view that Jeremiah used the fall year encounters objections on three points: an anniversary reckoning for the 23rd year of his ministry, an inconclusive "this year" extending into the 7th month, and an apparent, but not necessarily actual, misfit with the date of the battle of Carchemish (see on chapters 25:3; 28:12, 16, 17; 46:2).

Yet a spring reckoning for Jeremiah raises even more serious objections on three points: If he reckoned Zedekiah's year 1 from the spring, 597, half a year earlier than in 2 Kings, the final fall of Jerusalem occurred a whole year earlier (587); this date requires numbering Nebuchadnezzar's year 18 as year 19 and assuming either that the news of the city's fall took 18 months to reach Ezekiel in Babylon, or, if Ezekiel's dates are shifted a year earlier, that his vision of the siege was a year early. If Zedekiah's year 1 begins in spring, 596, the siege began a year later than according to Kings, unless it is assumed that the prophet changed to a fall reckoning (chapter 39:1) and then back. Therefore this book attributes a fall year to Jeremiah.

Jeremiah 52, an appendix carefully separated from “the words of Jeremiah” (see Jeremiah 51:64), does not necessarily indicate Jeremiah’s reckoning. Almost word the same as parts of 2 Kings 24-25, it reckons, like Kings, by Judah’s fall year. It counts the years of Jehoiachin’s captivity inclusively, as would be expected, from 598/97, as the synchronism of the 37th year requires.

Ezekiel, by either spring or fall reckoning, counts Jehoiachin’s captivity from 597/96—non-inclusively if it began with the known date of his capture, Adar 2, but inclusively if the starting point is his deportation “at the turn of the year” (see on 2 Chronicles 36:10), on or after Nisan 1. One explanation of a non-inclusive count would be the theory, based on archeological finds, that Jehoiachin was still a king in exile and that to Ezekiel, in Babylon, the “years of the captivity” meant Jehoiachin’s regnal years, with his year 1 beginning at the next New Year after his accession.

If Ezekiel, writing in Babylonia, employed the Babylonian calendar year, his use of the spring year would have no bearing on the question of the Jewish calendar year. But it seems extremely unlikely that Jeremiah, living and writing in the capital of Judah, should have used anything but the old Jewish civil fall-to-fall year, especially since it seems to be attested in the case of Josiah, under whom Jeremiah began his ministry. Some have pointed also to Jeremiah’s writing his messages in the 4th year of Jehoiakim, and having the scroll read to the people in the 9th month of the 5th year (Jeremiah 36:1-9), as more likely indicating an interval of two months plus (in the case of the fall year beginning in the 7th month) rather than nine months plus (as in the case of a spring year beginning with the 1st month). Further, the fall-to-fall year and the inclusive reckoning not only agree with the synchronisms in Kings, but also best harmonize Jeremiah’s prophecy of a 70-year captivity with the historical facts for the reigns of Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus, at the beginning and end of that period.

Captivity Ends in the Reign of Cyrus

Mention of the Babylonian captivity as the fulfillment of Jeremiah’s 70-year prophecy is followed immediately by that of Cyrus’ decree of his 1st year in which he encouraged the Jewish exiles to return to their homeland (see 2 Chronicles 36:21-23). Even before this decree Daniel had been anticipating the end of the 70 years. When Cyrus, already named in prophecy (Isaiah 44:28; Isaiah 45:1), conquered the empire that had taken the Jews captive, Daniel knew that the time was near (Daniel 9:1, 2). Before proceeding to a discussion of the end of the 70-year period, it will be necessary to examine the chronology of the capture of Babylon by Cyrus and the dating of his reign.

The Conquest of Babylon by Cyrus - Nabonidus, long known from Ptolemy’s Canon as the last king of the Neo-Babylonian Empire, was conquered by the forces of Cyrus according to several contemporary accounts. The Cyrus Cylinder tells of the taking of Babylon without a pitched battle and of the immediate acceptance of his kingship. The Nabonidus Chronicle places the fall of Babylon in the 7th month of Nabonidus’ 17th year. This date, as reckoned from Nebuchadnezzar’s astronomically fixed 37th year onward, through the intervening reigns according to Ptolemy’s Canon and the tablets, would be in October, 539 B.C. Likewise, reckoning back from Cambyses’ 7th year, which is also astronomically fixed, we find that the 1st year of Cyrus as king of Babylon began in the spring of 538, (See NOTE) the next Babylonian New Year’s Day after the fall of Babylon. This date, according to both the Canon of Ptolemy and the contemporary tablets, is accepted today without scholarly dispute as the official Babylonian reckoning.

NOTE: The year 838 has long been known for Ptolemy as 1st year of Cyrus. This explains why older historians, who did not know the accession year preceded the 1st year, placed the fall of Babylon in 538. The city fell late in 539, but the first full year of Cyrus’ control over Babylonia, and thus over the Jews, began in 538.

Belshazzar and Darius the Mede - But where do Belshazzar, the last “king of the Chaldeans,” and Darius the Mede, who took over his kingdom, enter the picture if the reign of Cyrus followed immediately after that of Nabonidus?

It is now known that Belshazzar’s kingship was not a separate chronological period following that of his father Nabonidus, but a joint rule in his father’s name. Tablets have been found identifying Belshazzar as the king’s eldest son, and as his representative during the father’s absence at Tema, in north western Arabia (from probably the 3rd to at least the 11th year of Nabonidus). The “Persian Verse Account of Nabonidus” says that Nabonidus “entrusted the kingship” to his eldest son “in the third year.” This is generally understood to mean in the 3rd regnal year (553/52, spring to spring). However, it has been suggested that “the third year” refers to the 3rd after the completion of a temple at Haran. Since the text says that this entrusting of the kingship to the son took place when Nabonidus was about to begin his conquest of Tema, and since he was in Tema before the 7th regnal year, this could not have been later than the 6th year (550/49). Thus for some years Belshazzar was an actual king, subordinate in rank but not in power in the government of Babylonia. Tablets written during his administration are dated in the years of his father, Nabonidus, the titular ruler of the land. Thus Belshazzar, the son and coregent, as the second ruler, could appropriately offer to make Daniel “third ruler in the kingdom” (Daniel 5:16, 29).

The chronological scheme allows just as much room for “Darius the Mede”—a name yet unknown in extra-Biblical contemporary records—as a ruler (See NOTE) as it does for Belshazzar as a ruler, though there was a day when the latter was unknown, except in the Bible record.

NOTE: “Darius the Mede” (who is mentioned only in Daniel 5:31; 6:1-28; 9:1; 11:1) is not to be confused with any of the three kings known to history as Darius. These were Darius I, also called Darius the Great, or Darius Hystaspes (522-486); Darius II (423-405/04); and Darius III (336/35-331). “Darius” alone is understood as Darius (I) the Great grandfather of Artaxerxes (so it is in Ezra 5 and 6, and in Haggai and Zechariah). “Darius the Persian” (see on Nehemiah 12:22) refers to the second of that name. Various views have been held, on the basis of secular records, identifying Darius the Mede with several characters known in extra-Biblical history by other names, but until further archeological information is available (as may be the case in the future), these cannot be considered conclusive.

That a “king” called Darius lived and reigned is not in question. The Bible record is clear. The only point in question is the relationship of his reign to that of Cyrus. It is evident that he reigned either before Cyrus or contemporaneously with him. Now the Babylonian records of that time and the Canon of Ptolemy count Cyrus’ reign as beginning immediately after the last year of Nabonidus. Therefore a reign of Darius the Mede contemporary with Cyrus would be in harmony with Scripture and secular records.

A further reason for viewing Cyrus as holding supreme power from the time of Babylon’s fall may reasonably be drawn from the fact that the Bible forecast that he was to be the conqueror of that great city, and thus of the great empire it represented (see Isaiah 45:1).

When Babylon fell, Darius, “of the seed of the Medes ... was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans” (Daniel 9:1). Even though Cyrus, the invincible conqueror of Babylon (Isaiah 45:1), was at the same time listed in the contemporary records as ruler, and had control of the new Persian Empire, it is not unreasonable to assume that he allowed Darius the Mede certain royal prerogatives for political reasons. On this assumption we may speak of Cyrus as taking over at the death of Darius the Mede.

This commentary, which seeks always to find a harmony between the inspired record and contemporary historical documents, sets forth the view that no necessary conflict exists between belief in Darius the Mede as a “king,” and also in Cyrus as a conqueror ruling immediately upon the collapse of Babylon.

The Bible does not say how long Darius the Mede reigned after he “was made king”; it merely mentions his 1st year (Daniel 9:1; cf. chapter 11:1). By the Babylonian reckoning, the fact that he had a 1st year would indicate that he ruled at least parts of two years—his accession year and his year 1. The absence of any further mention of him may mean that he never had a year 2, and that about that time Cyrus himself took over those royal honors or functions he had formerly allowed to Darius.

Cyrus’ First Year Begins New Empire - It has been explained that the Babylonian sources place the fall of Babylon late in 539 and year 1 of Cyrus as beginning in the spring of 538. That accounts for the importance of 538 as marking the 1st year of the new empire, under Persian leadership, that succeeded the Babylonian. Cyrus had ruled as king for a number of years before he conquered Babylon, first of Anshan, then of Persia, afterward adding Media (including much of the territory of the former Assyrian Empire), and Lydia in Asia Minor (see the Nabonidus Chronicle; the Cyrus Cylinder; Herodotus i.46, 73, 75, 87, 88, 127-130; Strabo xv.3.8; Ctesias, cited in (See NOTE) Diodorus Siculus ii.34.6, 7; Xenophon tells a different story in his *Cyropaedia* i.1.4; i.5. 2-5; vii.5.37, 58, 70; viii.1.5-11; viii.5.17-19). But when Cyrus captured Babylon, he immeasurably increased his prestige in becoming master of the mother-city of ancient Semitic civilization, and thus the 1st year of his control of Babylon was called the 1st year of his reign. In his proclamation to his Babylonian subjects he proudly styled himself “Cyrus, king of the universe, great king, mighty king, king of Babylon, king of Sumer and Akkad, king of the world quarters.” Thus Cyrus conquered the Semitic world, and he lacked only Egypt (later to be added by his son) to round out the great Persian Empire, one that embraced the eastern Mediterranean world and stretched to the borders of India.

NOTE: Diodorus Siculus, translated by C.H. Oldfather and Russel M. Geer, Loeb Classical Library (10 vols.; London, 1923-1957 [vols. 8 and 12 forthcoming])

The short-lived Neo-Babylonian Empire, flowering briefly in the glories of Nebuchadnezzar’s golden city, was the first of Daniel’s series of four world powers, but also the last phase of ancient Semitic domination. Now the second of Daniel’s series, Cyrus’ new Persian Empire, marked the passing of leadership to the Indo-European peoples, who later, through the Greeks and Romans, were to develop the civilization that gave Europe its long dominant position.

Cyrus’ First Year in Relation to the Jews - According to Scripture statements Cyrus’ decree permitting the Jewish exiles to return to Judea was issued in his first year (2 Chronicles 36:22; Ezra 1:1; Ezra 5:13). Since the fall of Babylon took place in Tishri (the 7th month) of 539, the year 1 of Cyrus began, by the reckoning of the Babylonian tablets, in the spring of 538. But the Jews reckoned differently; their civil years began in the autumn. The city fell after the Jewish New Year’s Day had passed. Hence the first Jewish year of the new regime could not have begun before the next Jewish New Year, Tishri 1, in the autumn of 538. By Jewish reckoning the decree might have been promulgated late in 537. It was necessarily issued some considerable time before the actual migration. If the decree was given in 537, and the journey of the exiles followed in the spring of 536, this would fulfill the 70 years of Jeremiah. A repatriation in the Jewish fall-to-fall year 537/36 would still be 70 years, inclusive, from the beginning of the Exile in the late summer of 605 (in the Jewish year 606/05).

The available information enables us to establish the 70 years as extending from about the time of the beginning of Nebuchadnezzar's reign to somewhere near the beginning of Cyrus' reign, but the exact B.C. dates are difficult to fix. More than one explanation has been offered in regard to the end of the period, the difference in method depending on the interpretation of the data concerning Cyrus and Darius the Mede. (See NOTE) The dates for the captivity are not pivotal points as are the dates involved in the time prophecies of Daniel; hence are not matters of doctrine. A detailed, long-term prophecy like the 70 weeks, on the other hand, is on an entirely different basis.

NOTE: The following explanations of the 70 years show various interpretations that have been set forth.

The first, based on data from the contemporary documents from Babylonia, offers satisfactory harmony between these sources and the Scripture; "the first year of Cyrus" was the Jewish civil year following that in which he took Babylon, the decree could have been issued as late as the autumn of 537. This would be in the early part of the year 2 by Babylonian reckoning, but still in year 1 by the Jewish fall-to-fall year. The decree was evidently issued in Ecbatana, for it was on file there some years later (Ezra 6:2, margin). That Cyrus was in Ecbatana in or preceding September, 537, seems to be indicated by a tablet in the archives of the Babylonian banking firm of "Egibi and Sons." If the decree was issued about that time, it is highly improbable that the returning exiles could have set out before the spring of 536. Such a large group of travelers would require considerable time after the receipt of the decree in order to make the necessary preparations for the migration. One would also expect the four-month journey (see Ezra 7:8) so that the people could be settled in new homes in the once-ruined towns before the autumn rains began. That they were so settled before they gathered to Jerusalem in the end of the 6th month to celebrate the Jewish New Year on the 1st of the 7th month is evident from Ezra 2:70; 3:1-6. The foregoing explanation places the return in 536, in the spring following the edict of Cyrus. This is not out of harmony with the Bible dating of the decree in the 1st year of the reign, for the return, which followed the decree, is not dated. (In Ezra 7, on the other hand, Artaxerxes' decree is undated, but the journey is definitely placed in the 7th year.) This explanation requires no juggling of the reigns at either end of the period. It is the basis for the comments on Ezra 1:1.

Many earlier writers began the 70 years with 606 as the supposed 4th year of Jehoiakim, and ended it 70 full years later by assigning the first two years of the new regime in Babylonia to a two-year reign of Darius the Mede, beginning the first year of Cyrus in 536 instead of 538. But there is no mention of a year 2 for Darius the Mede in the Bible, the only source for his reign.

A more recent modification of this view seeks to end the 70 years, inclusively reckoned, in the 1st year of Cyrus by allowing Darius the Mede an accession year and a year 1 preceding Cyrus:

First attack on Jerusalem	605 B.C.
Fall of Babylon	539 B.C.
Accession year of Darius the Mede (when Daniel prayed, realizing that the 70 years of Jeremiah's prophecy were about to end)	539/38 B.C.
Year 1 of Darius the Mede (in which he presumably died)	538/37 B.C.
Accession year of Cyrus (as supposed counted by those who did not recognize his reign until Darius died)	538/37 B.C.
Decree of Cyrus and return of the Jews (in the 1st year of Cyrus so reckoned, but in the 2nd Jewish year as counted from the fall of Babylon)	537/36 B.C.

This scheme, which puts the return in the summer of 536, within the latter half of the fall-to-fall year 537/36, would not be incompatible with the Bible record. Such a numbering of the years of Cyrus seems to be at variance with all the known

contemporary dated documents, for the numerous extant tablets make no reference to Darius the Mede, and are dated in every year of Cyrus from his accession year through year 9. If Cyrus' year 1 was 537/36 instead of the generally accepted 538/37, he could have had only 8 Babylonian years of reign before the 1st of Cambyses (whose 7th year is fixed astronomically) or 7 years by Jewish fall-to-fall reckoning. This scheme would have to be based on the assumption that Daniel presents a Jewish reckoning of Cyrus' years different from anything known in Babylonian records at the present time.

Those who choose to begin the 70 years with 4th year of Jehoiakim, in which Jeremiah made the prediction first, may consider that the captives were taken in the campaign of the 3rd year of Jehoiakim yet did not arrive in Babylonia until the beginning of the 4th year, after the autumn Jewish New Year, but still in 605 B.C. Thus 605-536 B.C. is still 70 years by inclusive reckoning, although it would throw the beginning of the 70th year into the 7th month, in the autumn of 536.

Some have pointed out that there are 70 full years between 586 and 516, but the captivity was ended long before the completion of the Temple, which was in the spring of 515.

Some end the 70 years in 538, the first year after the fall of Babylon to Cyrus, and go back 70 full years, thus arriving at 608. They observe that Judah, after the death of Josiah, became a pawn in the hands of foreign or the setting up of Jehoiakim as a puppet of Egypt does not fulfill the specifications of a 70-year servitude to Babylon (2 Chronicles 36:20, 21; Jeremiah 25:1-11; 29:1-10). Jehoiakim was put on the throne in 609, but there is no indication of Babylonian intervention until 605.

Some regard the 70 years as a round number, since the beginning date is not given.

It is to be hoped that just as archeology has cleared up the once-puzzling problem of Belshazzar, for instance, it will someday throw more light on Darius the Mede, the reign of Cyrus, and the end of the 70 years of Jeremiah.

Two other 70-year periods will be explained in the following section of this chapter.

The Period of the Rebuilding of the Temple

Building Program Begun - Under Cyrus' decree Zerubbabel, a prince of Judah, led 42,360 exiles to their homeland (see Ezra 1, 2). Then Zerubbabel's pioneers gathered at Jerusalem, and on the 1st of the 7th month reinstituted the sacrificial services on the rebuilt altar in the court of the ruined Temple (Ezra 3:1-6). Not until the following spring, in the 2nd month of the 2nd year of their return (verse 8), did they begin to lay the foundation of their new sanctuary, and the painful contrast between the present small beginning and the past glory made the old men weep while the multitude shouted for joy.

Hindrances Until the Reign of Darius I - Then, says Ezra, the adversaries of the Jews in the half-pagan province of Samaria (see on 2 Kings 17:23, 34; Ezra 4:2; 9:1) offered first help and then hindrance. They "hired counsellors against them, to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia" (Ezra 4:5). The sequence of Ezra 4 is debated, but the order of these kings has no bearing on any definite dates or on the fact that the reconstruction of the Temple "ceased unto the second year of the reign of Darius" (Ezra 4:24). This 2nd year of Darius I was 520/19 B.C.

Construction Resumed in Reign of Darius - After the long period of discouragement, during which the building program had ceased, the flagging zeal of the returned exiles was renewed by messages from the prophets Haggai and Zechariah in the 2nd year of Darius (Ezra 5:1, 2). They set to work on the Temple again, whereupon Tatnai, the governor of the province of "Beyond the River," of which Judea was a part, asked for their authorization for the construction. Their claim to having authorization was verified by the

finding of Cyrus' decree in Ecbatana (Ezra 6:2, margin). Darius, who was himself a monotheist and an imitator of the liberal policies of Cyrus, offered financial aid.

The Temple Finished Under Three Decrees - Then with opposition effectively removed, and with the enthusiastic leadership of the prophets, "they builded, and finished it, according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the commandment of Cyrus, and Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia. And this house was finished on the third day of the month Adar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king" (Ezra 6:14, 15), or approximately March 12, 515 B.C. Thus the actual building was finished in the reign of the second of the three kings mentioned in this text as issuing decrees in relation to the Temple—the edicts of Cyrus (about 537), Darius 1 (sometime after 520), and Artaxerxes I (458/57)—but further work was done on the Temple under the third decree, that of Artaxerxes (see on Ezra 6:14 and 7:27).

Ezra's account of the resumption of the Temple construction in the 2nd year of Darius mentions the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, whose books furnish several additional specific dates in this period that must be discussed next.

The Chronology of Haggai and Zechariah - The seven dates in the books of Haggai and Zechariah will be considered together, since all but one of them fell in the 2nd year of Darius I, and since the two prophets, being contemporaries and colleagues, presumably used the same calendar. These dates are specific; and only two of them are uncertain, because of difference of opinion as to whether the 2nd year of Darius is to be reckoned in the Babylonian-Persian spring-to-spring calendar or by the Jewish fall-to-fall civil calendar. Since Darius reckoned his accession from the autumn of 522, his Babylonian year 1 began in the spring of 521, at the Babylonian New Year's Day, and his year 2 began in the spring of 520. But his accession year in the Jewish fall-to-fall civil calendar would end, and his 1st year begin, in the autumn of 521, when the next Jewish New Year's Day came; and his 2nd year would begin in the autumn of 520. Darius' years always began a half-year later by the Jewish calendar.

Since the Babylonian year was reckoned by months 1 through 12, while the Jewish year began with the 7th month and ended with the 6th, the order of months in any specified year indicates which type it was. If the events described in Haggai are presented by him in chronological order, then the 6th month was followed by the 7th in Darius' 2nd year (Haggai 1:15; 2:1); and this would indicate that Haggai was reckoning that year as consisting of months 1 through 12, beginning with the 1st month (Nisan), in the spring. This has been assumed by commentators and historians generally, not only because it is the order of the narrative, but because that was the reckoning used in Babylonia.

It is well established that the 2nd year of Darius was 520/19 B.C., by either spring or fall reckoning. Then the lunar-month dates of Haggai and Zechariah, with the exception of the first two (Haggai 1:1, 15), can be assigned B.C. equivalents with certainty, for they fall in the half year in which the fall and spring years overlap.

NOTE: The official dating of the years of Darius I is well established by Ptolemy's Canon and two eclipse records, as well as the Saros Tablets. It is similarly anchored to the astronomically fixed 7th year of Cambyses by Darius' statement in his Behistun inscription that the false Bardiya (Smerdis) revolted in Media in the last month of the 7th year of Cambyses, seized the throne in the 8th year (the summer of 522 B.C.), and was defeated and killed by Darius on the 10th of the 7th month, in the autumn of the same year. From this date Darius counted his accession year, which lasted, by the Babylonian-Persian calendar, until the following spring, when his year 1 began on Nisan 1, 521. One modern authority, A. T. Olmstead, formerly interpreted the tablet

evidence as indicating that Darius falsified the official record, and that his reign actually began two years later than the autumn of 522 B.C., but this view did not prevail, and Olmstead himself later abandoned it. Hence there is no reason to reject the accepted dating of Darius I's 2nd year.

The opinion has also been put forth that Haggai and Zechariah were counting the years of Darius I by the old Judah fall--to-fall civil calendar year on the assumption that the chapters of Haggai are, like some other Bible passages, not presented in chronological order, and that the messages of Haggai in the 6th month (chapters 1:1 and 1:15) came after the messages of chapter 2, that is, in 519 instead of 520. However, there is no proof for this, and the sequence of events seems to be more reasonable if chapters 1 and 2 are regarded as being in consecutive order. If, as has been suggested, the dates involved in one of Zechariah's 70-year periods imply that he reckoned by the fall-to-fall year, this would strengthen the possibility that Haggai, his colleague and contemporary, did the same. But there can be no dogmatic conclusion drawn in this matter. Zechariah's three regnal dates (Zechariah 1:1, 7; 7:1), when taken alone, can be interpreted either way.

The dates are listed here in the order in which they occur in Haggai, with those of Zechariah inserted in place. The B.C. equivalents, probably correct approximately to the day, except for the first two, are added in the last column:

Text		Month	Day	Year	B.C. Equivalent
Haggai	1:1	6	1	2nd of Darius	[Aug 29, 520?]
	1:15	6	24	“	[Sept 21, 520?]
	2:1	7	21	“	Oct 17, 520
Zechariah	1:1	8		“	Oct/Nov 520
Haggai	2:10,18,20	9	24	“	Dec 18, 520
Zechariah	1:7	11	24	“	Feb 15, 519
	7:1	9	4	4th of Darius	Dec 7, 518

Zechariah's Seventy-Year Periods - It has been noted that, in addition to Jeremiah's prediction of the captivity, there were two other 70-year periods related to the Exile, both mentioned in retrospect. These were the 70 years of “indignation” against Judah and Jerusalem and the 70 years of the fast of the fifth month (in commemoration of the destruction of the Temple), in two messages of Zechariah dated respectively in the 2nd and 4th years of Darius (Zechariah 1:7, 12; 7:1, 3-5), or 520/19 and 518/17 B.C. If these were the 70th year of each period, the 1st year of each was, respectively, 589/88 and 587/86. Now, two events appropriate to these periods are the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, assigned on the best evidence to 589/88 B.C., and the destruction of the Temple (in the 5th month) in the summer of 586 (that is, 587/86, fall to fall). Thus these two periods may be understood as accurate time statements of 70 years, inclusive. Some explain these as referring to the 70 years of Jeremiah. But they have every appearance of being separate.

The Chronology of Esther, in the Reign of Xerxes

The identification of the Ahasuerus of the book of Esther with Xerxes is generally accepted today, since the spelling of his name in the Hebrew ('Achashwerosh) is similar to that appearing in contemporary documents (see on Esther 1:1). The reign of Xerxes is known, not only from Ptolemy's Canon, but also from a double-dated Elephantine papyrus. Hence the chronology of Esther presents no problems. The months, which attest the postexilic Jewish form of the Babylonian month names, do not by their sequence determine whether the regnal years were counted from spring or fall, since the year number is not mentioned in connection with the later events. Since all the action takes place in the Persian capital, the dates are probably Persian, and hence have no bearing on the Jewish calendar.

Dating the Journeys of Ezra and Nehemiah

After the initial resettlement in the reign of Cyrus, the next two milestones in the repatriation of the Jews were the arrival of Ezra with another company of exiles under a decree of Artaxerxes (important for the period of the 70 weeks) in the 7th year of that king and the coming of Nehemiah in the 20th year. The chronology of these two events depends on determining (1) which of three kings named Artaxerxes (Artaxerxes I, 465–423; Artaxerxes II, 404–359/58; Artaxerxes III, 359/58–338/37) commissioned these two Jewish leaders, and (2) the exact regnal-year dating involved.

The Artaxerxes of Ezra and Nehemiah - It was formerly taken for granted that the king whose 7th and 20th years are the key Biblical dates of this period was Artaxerxes I, son and successor of Xerxes, but since 1890 the opinion has been advanced, and increasingly accepted, that Ezra is to be dated in the time of Artaxerxes II. However, Nehemiah's connection with the first Artaxerxes is regarded as established, since one of the Elephantine papyri, dated 407 B.C., mentions the sons of Sanballat.

If, then, the Artaxerxes of Nehemiah was Artaxerxes I, the narrative of Ezra–Nehemiah unquestionably places Ezra's journey to Jerusalem in the 7th year of the same king, 13 years before Nehemiah's. Both were recognized leaders of the community in the ceremony of the dedication of the walls (Nehemiah 12:36, 38). Furthermore, the reading of the law on New Year's Day, the 1st of the 7th month (Nehemiah 8:1-6, 9), could hardly have happened many years before Ezra was sent to Jerusalem (Ezra 7) with full authority to establish the civil and religious administration in Judea and to teach the law of God in Israel (for a discussion of the relative dating of Ezra and Nehemiah. Therefore we may accept the Biblical order and place the return of Ezra in the reign of Artaxerxes I.

The Circumstances of Artaxerxes I's Accession - Since both Ezra and Nehemiah are dated by the chronology of Artaxerxes I, the source materials for this dating must be examined. A few historians have counted a short reign between Xerxes and Artaxerxes because the Egyptian king list of Manetho, and two early Christian chronographers who followed him, assigned seven months to Artabanus, the murderer of Xerxes. However the ancient Greek historians, while varying on the details, present Artaxerxes as the actual king but a puppet in the hands of Artabanus, the real power behind the throne, until he learned that Artabanus had murdered his father Xerxes and, indirectly, his older brother, and also was planning to do away with him as well and ascend the throne openly. Thereupon Artaxerxes slew Artabanus and took over the kingdom. There was, until recently, a gap in the archeological evidence for this regnal transition.

In the series of commercial tablets from that period there are none dated in Xerxes' last (21st) year or Artaxerxes' accession year, and none even mentioning Artabanus.

The Years of Artaxerxes I Dated by Contemporary Documents - The years of Artaxerxes' reign according to Ptolemy's Canon have long been known. In recent years this dating has been confirmed by eight double-dated Aramaic papyri written in a Jewish colony in Egypt in eight different years of that reign. Thus Artaxerxes' year 1 in the Egyptian calendar was, without doubt, that beginning on Thoth 1 (December 17), 465 B.C. One of these papyri, written January 2/3, 464, is dated in (Xerxes') "year 21, accession year when King Artaxerxes sat on his throne." The Jewish scribe who wrote that was for some reason reluctant to abandon Xerxes' regnal years and date in Artaxerxes' name alone, even though if Artaxerxes was king, Xerxes was certainly dead. (See NOTE) He was not dating in an Egyptian year; the Egyptian year 21 had ended, and this was now year 1—for so the Egyptians called the remainder of the calendar year in which a new king came in. Evidently this Jewish scribe was using his own calendar. The Jewish regnal reckoning was by a fall-to-fall year; therefore if a January 3 date was still in Artaxerxes' accession year, his year 1 began at the next Jewish New Year, in the fall of 464.

NOTE: For the date of his death there is no contemporary evidence, but if an unpublished Hellenistic tablet (some 150 or more years later) is correct, it was in August, 465 (A. J. Sachs, LBART No. 1419, cited in Parker and Dubberstein, Babylonian Chronology, 1956 ed., p. 17). He was dead before January 3, 464, according to this contemporary double-dated papyrus, designated as AP 6 (A. E. Cowley, Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C., No. 6). It has been suggested that this unusual dating in two reigns may reflect the uncertain status of Artaxerxes while Artabanus was in power (Andrews University Seminary Studies, VI [1968], pp. 60-87; see also Horn and Wood, the Chronology of Ezra 7, 2nd ed., rev., Washington: Review and Herald, 1970).

Locating the Seventh and Twentieth Years - According to these three calendars the 1st year of Artaxerxes, and the years 7 and 20 as well, can be tabulated:

	Year 1	Year 7	Year 20
By the Egyptian calendar (Dec-Dec)	465/64	459/58	446/45
By the Babylonian-Persian (spring-spring)	464/63	458/57	445/44
By the Jewish civil calendar (fall-fall)	464/63	458/57	445/44

There is no reason to suppose that the Bible writers would have used the Egyptian calendar. The B.C. dating of the journeys of Ezra and Nehemiah to Jerusalem hinges on whether, by Biblical reckoning, Artaxerxes' 7th and 20th years began with the 1st month, in spring, or with the 7th month, six months later.

The Journeys of Ezra and Nehemiah - The dates of Ezra's and Nehemiah's journeys, in terms of Artaxerxes' regnal years, are given as follows:

Year	Month	Day		
7	1	1	Ezra and party set out for Judea	Ezra 7:9

7	1	12	Ezra and party leave Ahava	Ezra 8:31
7	5	1	Ezra and party arrive at Jerusalem	Ezra 7:8,9
20	[9]	(Kislev)	Nehemiah receives news from Judea	Nehemiah 1:1
20	[1]	(Nisan)	Nehemiah gains permission to leave	Nehemiah 2:1

Ezra arrived at Jerusalem in the summer of Artaxerxes' 7th regnal year, and Nehemiah in the same season of the 20th year (see on Ezra 7:8; Nehemiah 6:15). Now the Babylonian-Persian 7th year began with the spring of 458 B.C. and ended in the spring of 457, thus covering the summer of 458; but the Jewish fall-to-fall 7th year, extending from the fall of 458 to the fall of 457, covered the summer of 457. If Ezra reached Jerusalem in the Babylonian-Persian 7th year, he obviously traveled in 458. On the other hand, if he arrived in the summer of the Jewish fall-to-fall 7th year, which did not end until the autumn of 457, he traveled in 457. There is evidence for the fall-to-fall year in various periods of Hebrew history; also in the very book of Ezra–Nehemiah itself, for the two dates of Nehemiah 1:1 and 2:1 show that Kislev (the 9th month) preceded Nisan (the 1st month) in the same 20th year. Since regnal years were then customarily calendar years, and since that year could not have begun with the 1st month, the obvious and inescapable inference is that it was a Jewish calendar year beginning with the 7th month, that is, in the autumn. Therefore it would seem logical to assume without further question that Ezra went to Jerusalem in 457 and Nehemiah in 444, in the 7th and 20th years, respectively, of Artaxerxes I as reckoned by the Jewish civil calendar. But opinion has varied on this question, as will be seen in the next paragraph.

Changes in Dating of Artaxerxes - Although many earlier authorities placed Ezra's return in 457, modern histories and reference books tend to give 458 for the 7th year of Artaxerxes, arrived at by the spring-to-spring reckoning. (See NOTE) This is based on the assumption either (1) that the regnal dates of Artaxerxes, as a Persian king, must be reckoned by the Babylonian-Persian calendar, or (2) that the Jews themselves at this time counted regnal years from spring to spring. In either case the fall reckoning of Nehemiah is considered erroneous, and his Nisan events following Kislev of year 20 must be "corrected" to Nisan of year 21. But neither assumption is valid. The Elephantine papyri disprove the first and lend no support to the second. These papyri, the only direct archeological evidence for Jewish usage, have been interpreted by some (especially in the United States) as supporting the spring-to-spring reckoning, but the most recently published group of Elephantine papyri contains the first conclusive evidence on that question. How this evidence proves a Jewish fall-to-fall year will be explained in the following section of this chapter, but the conclusion may be stated here.

NOTE: The earlier writers, some of whom gave 458 and others 457, arrived at their dates by various methods, but there was no adequate basis for the chronology before the discovery of ancient sources like the Babylonian tablets and the Elephantine papyri. Some earlier scholars thought that Artaxerxes's Persian years were the same as Ptolemy's Egyptian years, and thus placed the summer of the 7th and 20th years in 458 and 445 B.C. Some made a mistake of one year in calculating the Egyptian New Year's Day in its backward shift of a day in four years, and thus began Artaxerxes' 1st year, by the canon, in December, 464, instead of December, 465, consequently placing the whole reign one year late. Others, like Isaac Newton, arrived at the correct dating by two mistaken assumption, each of which canceled out the other: Newton thought Artaxerxes came to the throne only in the latter half of 464, after a supposed reign of some months by Artabanus; and he assumed that the 1st year began on the day of accession—both incorrect assumptions. Thus some of the earlier datings for 9 or 10 years by pure conjecture; all were untenable because based on erroneous premises. Nearly all later authorities, using the newer knowledge of the spring-beginning

Babylonian-Persian year and the accession-year system, have assigned these Ezra and Nehemiah dates to 458 and 445 respectively. That is why newer histories give 458 and 445 (some of them use 444, because they “correct” the date of Nehemiah’s journey to the 21st year of the reign). However, in thus doing they have ignored the possibility that the Jews might be expected to use their own fall-to-fall reckoning rather than the Babylonian spring year.

Dates of Ezra and Nehemiah Established - In the light of the evidence for Jewish fall-to-fall reckoning of the year, there is no reason whatever to “correct” Nehemiah’s Nisan date from the 20th to the 21st year. The logical and reasonable explanation of Nehemiah 1:1 and 2:1 is that they indicate the Jewish fall-to-fall year, in which months 7–12 precede months 1–6 of the same year. Therefore the journeys of Ezra and Nehemiah to Jerusalem in the 7th and 20th years of Artaxerxes I are to be dated according to the Jewish fall-to-fall calendar (in which the 7th and 20th years were 458/57 and 445/44), and thus in the spring and summer of 457 and 444 B.C. respectively.

The conclusions concerning the dating of Ezra’s and Nehemiah’s journeys—long a much-confused subject—may be summarized as follows:

(1) Most modern writers, using the Egyptian year of Ptolemy’s Canon or, later, the Babylonian-Persian spring-to-spring year, have placed Ezra’s journey in 458 B.C., since the 7th year by either of these calendar systems (459/58 and 458/57 respectively) includes the spring and summer of 458, but ends before the month of Nisan in 457. (See NOTE) According to this the journey of Nehemiah would have occurred in 445, although many of those who assign Ezra’s expedition to 458 place that of Nehemiah in 444, on the assumption that the latter returned in the 21st year instead of the 20th.

NOTE: Some earlier writers placed Ezra’s return in 457 B.C. (and Nehemiah’s in 444) on the basis that “the 7th year of Artaxerxes is 457 B.C. according to Ptolemy’s Canon.” Actually the 7th year according to Ptolemy’s Canon is 459/58, though 458/57 might be spoken of as the 7th year as derived from Ptolemy’s Canon and the source documents, since the relationship of the Egyptian year to the Persian spring year and the Jewish fall year is involved.

(2) In the Jewish civil-calendar reckoning the 7th year of Artaxerxes was 458/57, fall to fall, according to the more exact evidence as we have it now from the Babylonian tablets and the Jewish papyri from Egypt. This places Ezra’s return in the summer of 457 B.C. and Nehemiah’s in the 20th year in 444.

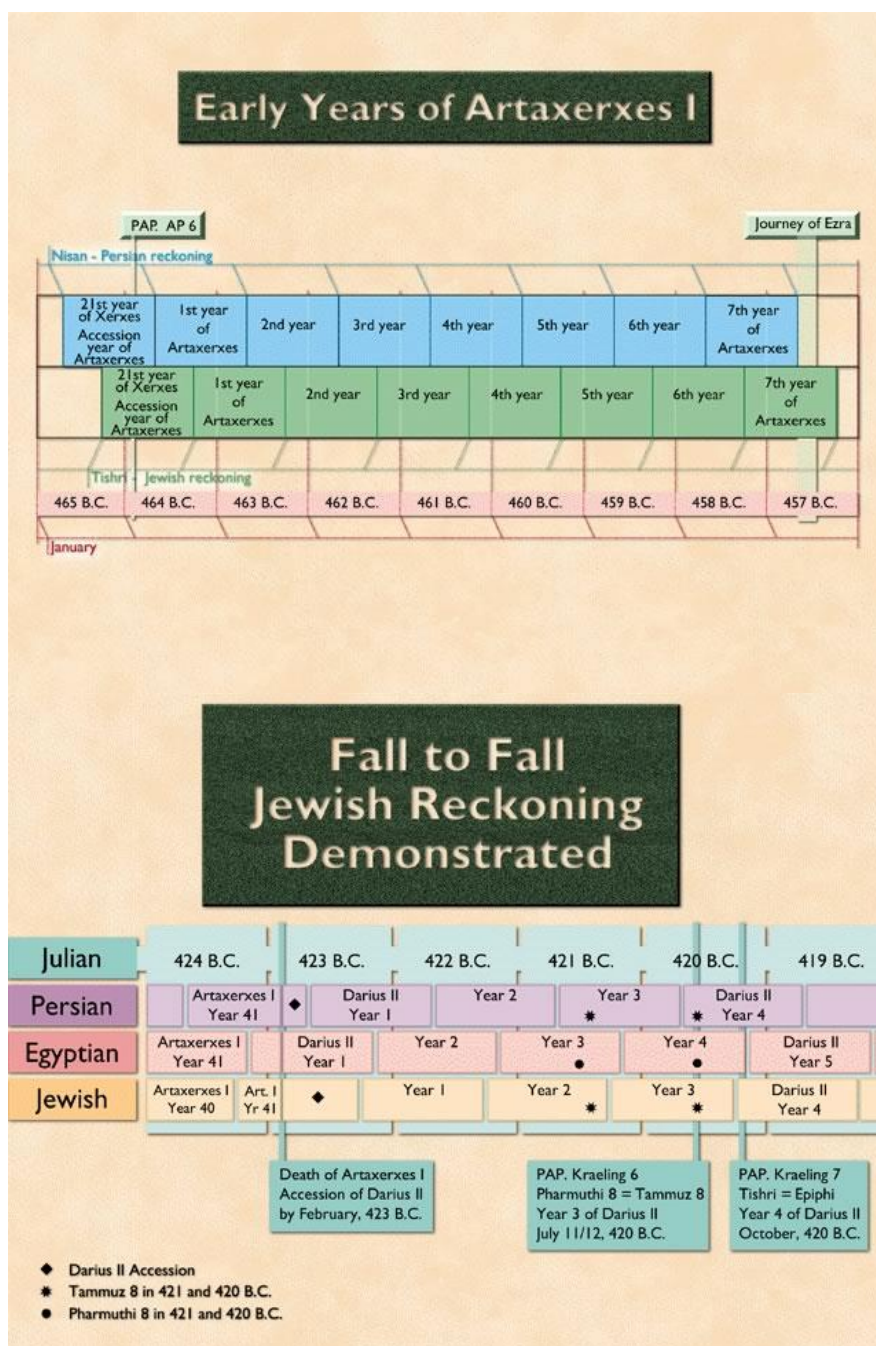
Since the evidence from the Bible and from archeology favors the fall reckoning, as in paragraph (2), the dates 457 and 444 may be taken as established.

The Elephantine Papyri and the Jewish Calendar

In showing that the dating of the journeys of Ezra and Nehemiah hinges on the spring versus the fall year, it has been stated that Jewish papyri from Elephantine, formerly inconclusive on this point, now furnish evidence for the fall-to-fall reckoning. For those who wish to examine the reasons why the papyri are important to the decision in favor of the fall-to-fall reckoning in Ezra–Nehemiah, the following brief survey of the evidence furnished by the papyri and of its bearing on the Biblical reckoning is provided.

Spring Year or Fall Year in Elephantine? - The double-dated Elephantine papyri were drawn up in a Jewish community under the Egyptian legal system; hence the Egyptian year number was customarily given, but the Semitic lunar-year number was often omitted.

In the period of these papyri the Babylonian spring year began about four months later than the corresponding Egyptian solar year, and the Jewish fall-to-fall year six months later than the Babylonian. The Egyptian year 4, for example, of any of these reigns ran about 4 months before the Babylonian year 3 ended and year 4 began, but it would run an additional 6 months before the Jewish year number changed from 3 to 4.



On such a basis a series of complete double dates would show, by the Egyptian month in which the Semitic lunar-year numbers changed, whether the writers of these papyri reckoned the lunar dates from a spring or a fall New Year. But most papyri gave only one year number, even during that part of the year

when two would be expected in a complete double date. Heretofore all the known double-dated papyri were inconclusive (See NOTE) until a papyrus was found with a date line of a kind that could have been reckoned only by a spring-to-spring year or only by a fall-to-fall year.

NOTE: Some of them came from that portion of the year when the regnal number was the same in both spring and fall reckonings, and hence could have been dated in either system. Others appeared to require a spring-to-spring year because of the absence of a differing number, but they too were inconclusive, since some of the papyri that bore only the Egyptian year number were actually written in a part of the year when the two differing year numbers would be expected. The absence of a second year number is not proof that both were the same.

New Papyrus Proves Fall Reckoning - Finally one such document was found, No. 6 of the Brooklyn Museum Papyri, published by Emil G. Kraeling in 1953. It is a deed to (part of?) a house in Elephantine presented to a prospective Jewish bride. It bears only one year number, the 3rd year of Darius (II), but the month and day of the Egyptian calendar agree with those of the lunar calendar only in July, 420 B.C. This harmony is not possible in either the Egyptian year 3 (beginning in December, 422) or the Babylonian-Persian year 3 (beginning in the spring of 421), but only with the fall-to-fall year of the Jewish civil calendar, which began in the autumn of 421 and so included July, 420. Therefore the lunar calendar in which this papyrus was dated was not the Babylonian but the Jewish civil calendar, with the year beginning in the autumn. Consequently the other papyri, inconclusive in themselves, should be interpreted in the light of this one. Obviously the Jews in Elephantine must, like Nehemiah, have used the old fall-to-fall civil calendar.

The editor and translator of Papyrus 6 mentions the fact that the date will not fit into the 3rd year of the reign according to the Egyptian and Persian reckoning, and notes the fall-to-fall year as one conclusion, (See NOTE 1) but he himself accepts the alternative of conjecturing a scribe's error. There are only two alternatives. If this clearly written date is correct, the year began in the autumn, (See NOTE 2) and Nehemiah's usage is unquestioned. The only reason for supposing that the papyrus date is an error is the fact that it does not agree with the current widespread scholarly opinion that the Jews adopted not only the Babylonian month names but the Babylonian calendar outright, including the spring New Year.

NOTE: This view that the Jews used the spring year (and hence that Nehemiah 1:1 and 2:1 are in error) appears to be connected with the higher-critical application of the "law" of evolution to the supposed gradual development of the Jewish religion toward a lofty monotheism. By this theory most of the "Mosaic" law, including the Passover and the fixing of the first month in the spring, was not a rediscovery but an innovation at the time of the reform of Josiah. This explains the phenomenon of the critical-scholarly reluctance in some quarters to admit a postexilic Jewish fall-to-fall year, also the tendency to interpret the inconclusive dates of the earlier Elephantine papyri as evidence for the spring year and to brush aside this new papyrus as a scribal error with hardly a thought of an alternative interpretation. Biblical scholars, like their fellow mortals, can be influenced by their theories, and contrary evidence often proves hard to accept. Of course such an explanation can have little weight in a commentary whose editors, contributors, and readers accept the high ethical monotheism of the "Deuteronomic code" as a revelation from God at the time of the Exodus, not a product of the "evolving" Jewish mind.

NOTE 1: Set forth by S. H. Horn and L. H. Wood, Journal of Near Eastern Studies, XIII (1954), pp. 1-20.

NOTE 2: The fact that Papyrus 6 was written only a few months before the end of year 3 seems to be corroborated by Papyrus 7, the very interesting marriage contract of the same girl, dated evidently the next Tishri (approximately October). Since Papyrus 6 is proved to have been dated in the fall-to-fall calendar, it would be expected that No. 7 would show a change in the year number—for Tishri would be in year 4 by the Jewish calendar (as well as by the Egyptian and Persian). Although the papyrus is broken, leaving the year numeral incomplete, its reconstruction to year 4 is rather certain. Being written in the same year 4 according to all three calendars, No. 7 does not prove which reckoning was used, but it confirms the evidence of Papyrus 6 for the fall-to-fall year.

But not one who wishes to give all the Bible writers a hearing and to discovery what they mean, without impatiently assuming that the “late editors” misunderstood the earlier writers and that the supposed errors of Scripture must be corrected by theory and conjecture, is gratified to find that it is not necessary to abandon Moses, to ignore Josiah and Jeremiah, and to assume that Nehemiah was wrong. The Jewish calendar need not agree with the Babylonian.

Significance of the Elephantine Jewish Calendar - Were these Jews in Egypt employing the Persian calendar or the same Jewish calendar they had used in Palestine? If these colonists, on coming into Egypt (before 525 B.C.), had adopted a foreign calendar it would have been the Egyptian solar calendar, not a Babylonian-Persian system, for Egypt had not at that time been made part of the Persian Empire. They would not have used double dating, since some of these papyri, as well as the demotic Egyptian texts from other parts of the country, carry only the Egyptian date. Therefore the double dates show that they retained their old calendar along with that of the Egyptians.

Thus it is evident that a Persian king’s years need not be reckoned by the Babylonian-Persian calendar, but are more likely to be reckoned in the national or ancestral calendar of the writer. That is exactly what we find in the only conclusive dating among these Elephantine papyri. Just as these colonists considered themselves separate from the Egyptians to the extent of retaining their own calendar, they seem to have considered themselves akin to their repatriated brethren in Palestine, as their correspondence shows. Hence their use of the fall-to-fall year, even considered apart from the Ezra-Nehemiah evidence, would lead to the conclusion that they were in accord with Palestinian custom in this.

An advocate of the theory of the late date of the Pentateuch, and of the introduction of the spring year by Josiah, is likely to see the supposed spring reckoning in the formerly inconclusive papyri as part of a chain of postexilic evidences for the spring usage from Josiah on. In this he would include Ezekiel, Haggai and Zechariah, Esther, and even Nehemiah (for he tends to brand as erroneous the fall-to-fall sequence in Nehemiah 1:1 and 2:1). But actually there is no continuous chain of evidence for the spring reckoning. Jeremiah almost certainly used a fall year; Ezekiel probably did also, and even if he did not, his book and Esther are irrelevant to the problem because they were written during the Exile, in Babylonia and Persia. Haggai’s usage is less than proof for the spring reckoning, (See NOTE) and there is the possibility of Zechariah’s fall reckoning. The links in this chain tend to fall apart, leaving the supposed spring year of the papyri unsupported, and Nehemiah 1:1 and 2:1 unchallenged.

NOTE: Even if the spring-to-spring year be insisted on for the time of Haggai and Zechariah because of the order of Haggai’s dates, it should be remembered that there is a great difference between the conditions of that period, when national consciousness had long been at a low ebb, and the situation of the restored Jewish community in Judea 70 years later, in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, with the Temple rebuilt, the civil and religious administration reorganized under the “law of God,” and finally the capital fortified. Along with the new emphasis on the national law, on the elimination of foreign influences and foreign languages, and on the observance of the national festivals, the old national calendar reckoning of Judah would naturally be restored, if indeed it had not been in use all along; for the community of repatriated Jews, founded by the Davidic prince Zerubbabel and the Levitical priesthood, was a continuation of the nation of Judah. Thus the use of the old Jewish civil fall-to-fall calendar was to be expected.

Now the proof of Jewish fall-to-fall reckoning in the Elephantine papyri changes the picture radically. Anyone not preoccupied with the theory of the spring-beginning year can find the postexilic data reasonably consistent in indicating that the fall-beginning year was not abandoned. Thus the Elephantine calendar becomes a link in the long chain of evidence for the fall-to-fall reckoning extending from the

civil year of ancient times to Ezra–Nehemiah, including Solomon, Josiah, the corroborative though indirect evidence for Judah’s kings from the synchronisms, and Jeremiah, possibly the usage of Ezekiel and Zechariah. The fall-to-fall year in Elephantine thus confirms unequivocally the usage of Ezra–Nehemiah, and therefore the accuracy of the chronological data of the Bible writers of this period.

The Postexilic Jewish Calendar in Egypt - The double-dated papyri furnish considerable information about the Jewish calendar as used at Elephantine. They also fix a number of exact dates, accurate to within a day. Since the Egyptian day began at sunrise, and the Jewish at sunset, there could be a difference of opinion in some cases as to whether a specific Egyptian day is to be aligned with the Jewish day beginning 12 hours earlier or that beginning 12 hours later (depending on whether the document was written before or after sunset). Where a papyrus date establishes a given day of the month in this manner, the whole month is similarly fixed, and the other months of that year are also known virtually to the day. It is to be remembered that an ancient lunar month cannot be fixed with complete certainty, because of the possible variation of a day or so each way. But within these limits there are a number of these completely known years in this Jewish calendar during the 5th century, and the other years of the period can be approximated with a relatively high degree of precision, allowing leeway for the exact location of some of the 13th months.

Tentative Reconstruction of Elephantine Jewish Calendar - A calendar reconstructed around the fourteen known months fixed by the double-dated papyri gives a very close approximation of the B.C. date of the 1st of each month for the Jewish years from 472/71 through 400/399 B.C. Such a tabulation has been computed by Siegfried H. Horn and Lynn H. Wood on the following premises:

1. The year begins with Tishri 1, in the autumn.
2. The 1st of each month is computed theoretically, but based on a reasonable interval after conjunction, so as to keep as close as possible to the observed crescent.
3. These computed months are derived from the working hypothesis of a regularly alternating sequence of 30-day and 29-day months from Nisan through Tishri, with adjustments in the other half of the year.
4. These adjustments appear to have resulted in four types of years, those of 354, 355, 383, or 384 days (the 353- and 385-day years, used today by the Jews, must have been introduced much later).
5. A second Adar is assumed to have been inserted whenever Nisan 1 would precede the vernal equinox, which fell about March 26.
6. This results in the pattern of a second Adar in 7 out of each 19 years. Except in two cases, when a fixed papyrus date seems to indicate otherwise, these 13th months fell in the years commonly numbered 3, 6, 8, 11, 14, 17, and 19 of the Babylonian 19-year cycle.

Since this tabulation forms the basis for the exact Jewish dates given in this chapter, it is reproduced here entire from the unpublished copy for the convenience of any readers of this book who wish to make a detailed study of the dates for the period indicated.

Tables of Elephantine Jewish Calendar, 472/471 Through 400/399 B.C.

How to Use This Calendar Tabulation:—Each horizontal line of dates in this tabulation represents a regnal year as reckoned in the Jewish fall-to-fall calendar, beginning with Tishri, the 7th month. The first eight-line section comprises the 14th through the 21st years of Xerxes, and the following sections are the reigns of Artaxerxes I and so on. The boldface figures are the B.C. years (those starred are leap years); and the dates on each line (10/6, 11/5, etc.) are the Julian-calendar dates on which the 1st of each Jewish month falls.

For example, the first line represents the 14th year of the Xerxes by Jewish reckoning. It begins in 472 B.C. (second column) with Tish[ri] 1, which falls on October 6, abbreviated to 10/6 (third column), that is, the day beginning at sunset of October 5. The 1st of the next month, Mar[heshvan], is 11/5 (November 5, beginning at sunset of November 4); Kis[lev] 1 is December 4. Next comes the boldface figure 471, indicating the opening of a new B.C. year (Julian). Hence the remaining months of this Jewish year begin in 471: Teb[eth] 1 falls on January 3, 471; Sheb[at] 1 on February 1, Ad[ar] 1 on March 3, Nis[an] 1 on April 1, Iyy[ar] 1 on May 1, Siv[an] 1 on May 30, Tam[muz] 1 on June 29, Ab 1 on July 28, Elul 1 on August 27. This last date appears in red because one of the double-dated papyri was written in that month, thus fixing the date. (The 14 dates so marked on this calendar are the basis on which the rest of the calendar is computed.)

In the next year, the 15th of Xerxes, which begins in 471 B.C. (September 25), Tebeth is still in 471; hence the boldface date 470 appears in the column between Tebeth and Shebat, which is the first month beginning in 470. This 15th year has a 13th month, the second Adar. The column headed “Ad[ar] II” shows that 7 out of 19 years contain the second Adar.

Many Biblical dates in this chapter of the book have been computed according to this tentative reconstruction of the Jewish calendar; for example, the dates of Ezra’s journey to Judea (Ezra 7:9; 8:15, 31). In the tabulation the line numbered the 7th year of Artaxerxes I shows that year beginning by Jewish reckoning in 458 B.C., on Tishri 1, or October 2, and places Nisan 1 of that year, the date of Ezra’s departure, on March 27, 457. Ezra left Ahava on the 12th of the same month, 11 days later, which would be April 7 (that is, April 6/7, sunset to sunset); and his arrival date, the 1st of the 5th month (Ab), was July 23. Although the B.C. number at the beginning of this 7th year is 458, it changes to 457 between Tebeth 1 and Shebat 1; hence Ezra’s dates in Nisan and Ab are all in 457.

Year		(7)	(8)	(9)		(10)		(11)	(12)	(13)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Regnal	B.C.	Tish.	Mar.	Kis.	B.C.	Teb.	B.C.	Sheb.	Ad.	Ad. II	Nis.	Iyy.	Siv.	Tam.	Ab.	Elul.
XERXES																
14	472	10/6	11/5	12/4	471	1/3		2/1	3/3		4/1	5/1	5/30	6/29	7/28	8/27
15	471	9/25	10/25	11/23		12/23	470	1/21	2/20	3/22	4/20	5/20	6/18	7/18	8/16	9/15

16	470	10/14	11/23	12/12	469*	1/11		2/9	3/10		4/8	5/8	6/6	7/6	8/4	9/3
17	469	10/2	11/1	12/1		12/31	468	1/29	2/28		3/29	4/28	5/27	6/26	7/25	8/24
18	468	9/22	10/22	11/20		12/20	467	1/18	2/17	3/19	4/17	5/17	6/15	7/15	8/13	9/12
19	467	10/11	11/10	12/9	466	1/8		2/6	3/8		4/6	5/6	6/4	7/4	8/2	9/1
20	466	9/20	10/30	11/28		12/28	465*	1/26	2/25	3/26	4/24	5/24	6/22	7/22	8/20	9/19
21	465	10/18	11/17	12/16	464	1/15		2/13	3/15		4/13	5/13	6/11	7/11	8/9	9/8

ARTAXERXES I

1	464	10/7	11/6	12/6	463	1/5		2/3	3/5		4/3	5/3	6/1	7/1	7/30	8/29
2	463	9/27	10/27	11/25		12/25	462	1/23	2/22	3/24	4/22	5/22	6/20	7/20	8/18	9/17
3	462	10/16	11/15	12/14	461*	1/13		2/11	3/12		4/10	5/10	6/8	7/8	8/6	9/5
4	461	10/4	11/3	12/2	460	1/1		1/30	3/1		3/30	4/29	5/28	6/27	7/26	8/25
5	460	9/23	10/23	11/21		12/21	459	1/19	2/18	3/20	4/18	5/18	6/16	7/16	8/14	9/13
6	459	10/12	11/11	12/11	458	1/10		2/8	3/10		4/8	5/8	6/6	7/6	8/4	9/3
7	458	10/2	11/1	11/30		12/30	457*	1/28	2/27		3/27	4/26	5/25	6/24	7/23	8/22
8	457	9/20	10/20	11/18		12/18	456	1/16	2/15	3/17	4/15	5/15	6/13	7/13	8/11	9/10
9	456	10/9	11/8	12/7	455	1/6		2/4	3/6		4/4	5/4	6/2	7/2	7/31	8/30
10	455	9/28	10/28	11/26		12/26	454	1/24	2/23	3/25	4/23	5/23	6/21	7/21	8/19	9/18
11	454	10/17	11/16	12/15	453*	1/14		2/12	3/13		4/11	5/11	6/9	7/9	8/7	9/6
12	453	10/5	11/4	12/4	452	1/3		2/1	3/3		4/1	5/1	5/30	6/29	7/28	8/27
13	452	9/25	10/25	11/23		12/23	451	1/21	2/20	3/22	4/20	5/20	6/18	7/18	8/16	9/15
14	451	10/14	11/13	12/12	450	1/11		2/9	3/11		4/9	5/9	6/7	7/7	8/5	9/4
15	450	10/3	11/2	12/2	449*	1/1		1/30	2/29		3/29	4/28	5/27	6/26	7/25	8/24
16	449	9/22	10/22	11/20		12/20	448	1/18	2/17	3/19	4/17	5/17	6/15	7/15	8/13	9/12
17	448	10/11	11/10	12/9	447	1/8		2/6	3/8		4/6	5/6	6/4	7/4	8/2	9/1
18	447	9/30	10/30	11/28		12/28	446	1/26	2/25		3/26	4/25	5/24	6/23	7/22	8/21

19	446	9/19	10/19	11/17		12/17	445*	1/15	2/14	3/15	4/13	5/13	6/11	7/11	8/9	9/8
20	445	10/7	11/6	12/5	444	1/4		2/2	3/4		4/2	5/2	5/31	6/30	7/29	8/28
21	444	9/26	10/26	11/24		12/24	443	1/22	2/21	3/23	4/21	5/21	6/19	7/19	8/17	9/16
22	443	10/15	11/14	12/14	442	1/13		2/11	3/13		4/11	5/11	6/9	7/9	8/7	9/6
23	442	10/5	11/4	12/3	441*	1/2		1/31	3/1		3/30	4/29	5/28	6/27	7/26	8/25
24	441	9/23	10/23	11/21		12/21	440	1/19	2/18	3/20	4/18	5/18	6/16	7/16	8/14	9/13
25	440	10/12	11/11	12/10	439	1/9		2/7	3/9		4/7	5/7	6/5	7/5	8/3	9/2
26	439	10/1	10/31	11/29		12/29	438	1/27	2/26	3/28	4/26	5/26	6/24	7/24	8/22	9/21
27	438	10/20	11/19	12/18	437*	1/17		2/15	3/16		4/14	5/14	6/12	7/12	8/10	9/9
28	437	10/8	11/7	12/7	436	1/6		2/4	3/6		4/4	5/4	6/2	7/2	7/31	8/30
29	436	9/28	10/28	11/26		12/26	435	1/24	2/23	3/25	4/23	5/23	6/21	7/21	8/19	9/18
30	435	10/17	11/16	12/15	434	1/14		2/12	3/14		4/12	5/12	6/10	7/10	8/8	9/7
31	434	10/6	11/5	12/5	433*	1/4		2/2	3/3		4/1	5/1	5/30	6/29	7/28	8/27
32	433	9/25	10/25	11/23		12/23	432	1/21	2/20	3/22	4/20	5/20	6/18	7/18	8/16	9/15
33	432	10/14	11/13	12/12	431	1/11		2/9	3/11		4/9	5/9	6/7	7/7	8/5	9/4
34	431	10/3	11/2	12/1		12/31	430	1/29	2/28		3/29	4/28	5/27	6/26	7/25	8/24
35	430	9/22	10/22	11/20		12/20	429*	1/18	2/17	3/18	4/16	5/16	6/14	7/14	8/12	9/11
36	429	10/10	11/9	12/9	428	1/8		2/6	3/8		4/6	5/6	6/4	7/4	8/2	9/1
37	428	9/30	10/30	11/28		12/28	427	1/26	2/25		3/26	4/25	5/24	6/23	7/22	8/21
38	427	9/19	10/19	11/17		12/17	426	1/15	2/14	3/16	4/14	5/14	6/12	7/12	8/10	9/9
39	426	10/8	11/7	12/6	425*	1/5		2/3	3/4		4/2	5/2	5/31	6/30	7/29	8/28
40	425	9/26	10/26	11/24		12/24	424	1/22	2/21	3/23	4/21	5/21	6/19	7/19	8/17	9/16
41	424	10/15	11/14	12/13	423	1/12		2/10	3/12		4/10	5/10	6/8	7/8	8/6	9/5
DARIUS II																
1	423	10/4	11/3	12/3	422	1/2		1/31	3/2		3/31	4/30	5/29	6/28	7/27	8/26

2	422	9/24	10/24	11/22		12/22	421*	1/20	2/19	3/20	4/18	5/18	6/16	7/16	8/14	9/13
3	421	10/12	11/11	12/20	420	1/9		2/7	3/9		4/7	5/7	6/5	7/5	8/3	9/2
4	420	10/1	10/31	11/30		12/30	419	1/28	2/27		3/28	4/27	5/26	6/25	7/24	8/23
5	419	9/21	10/21	11/19		12/19	418	1/17	2/16	3/18	4/16	5/16	6/14	7/14	8/12	9/11
6	418	10/10	11/9	12/8	417*	1/7		2/5	3/6		4/4	5/4	6/2	7/2	7/31	8/30
7	417	9/28	10/28	11/26		12/26	416	1/24	2/23	3/25	4/23	5/23	6/21	7/21	8/19	9/18
8	416	10/17	11/16	12/15	415	1/14		2/12	3/14		4/12	5/12	6/10	7/10	8/8	9/7
9	415	10/6	11/5	12/4	414	1/3		2/1	3/3		4/1	5/1	5/30	6/29	7/28	8/27
10	414	9/25	10/25	11/23		12/23	413*	1/21	2/20	3/21	4/19	5/19	6/17	7/17	8/15	9/14
11	413	10/13	11/12	12/12	412	1/11		2/9	3/11		4/9	5/9	6/7	7/7	8/5	9/4
12	412	10/3	11/2	12/1		12/31	411	1/29	2/28		3/29	4/28	5/27	6/26	7/25	8/24
13	411	9/22	10/22	11/20		12/20	410	1/18	2/17	3/19	4/17	5/17	6/15	7/15	8/13	9/12
14	410	10/11	11/10	12/9	409*	1/8		2/6	3/7		4/5	5/5	6/3	7/3	8/1	8/31
15	409	9/29	10/29	11/28		12/28	408	1/26	2/25		3/26	4/25	5/24	6/23	7/22	8/21
16	408	9/19	10/19	11/17		12/17	407	1/15	2/14	3/16	4/14	5/14	6/12	7/12	8/10	9/9
17	407	10/8	11/7	12/6	406	1/5		2/3	3/5		4/3	5/3	6/1	7/1	7/30	8/29
18	406	9/27	10/27	11/25		12/25	405*	1/23	2/22	3/23	4/21	5/21	6/19	7/19	8/17	9/16
19	405	10/15	11/14	12/13	404	1/12		2/10	3/12		4/10	5/10	6/8	7/8	8/6	9/5

ARTAXERXES II

1	404	10/4	11/3	12/2	403	1/1		1/30	3/1		3/30	4/29	5/28	6/27	7/26	8/25
2	403	9/23	10/23	11/21		12/21	402	1/19	2/18	3/20	4/18	5/18	6/16	7/16	8/14	9/13
3	402	10/12	11/11	12/11	401*	1/10		2/8	3/9		4/7	5/7	6/5	7/5	8/3	9/2
4	401	10/1	10/31	11/29		12/29	400	1/27	2/26		3/27	4/26	5/25	6/24	7/23	8/22
5	400	9/20	10/20	11/18		12/18	399	1/16	2/15	3/17	4/15	5/15	6/13	7/13	8/11	9/10

*This is a leap year.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THE CHRONOLOGY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT PROPHETS

Introduction

The sixteen prophets—Isaiah to Malachi—whose writings have come down to us lived during four centuries, from about 800 to 400 B.C. Most of them left chronological data by which the duration of their ministry can be determined, at least approximately. For two of them (Joel and Obadiah), however, no conclusive evidence as to the time of their work exists, and scholars differ widely in their views concerning this matter.

The accompanying chart enables the reader to study these prophets in their historical setting. Many messages and prophecies can be understood correctly only if seen against the background of the time in which the prophets ministered and in the light of the events that happened during their lives.

Inasmuch as it is possible to date the kings of Judah and Israel, especially the later ones, with comparatively high accuracy, the various reigns during which these sixteen prophets ministered have been entered in this chart according to the tentative chronology used in this book. The kings of Assyria, Babylonia, and Persia, whose dates for this period are well established, are shown in a separate column. Most of them are mentioned in the Bible, in either the prophetic or the historical books. One column provides a list of certain special events of this period—some of a political nature, concerning the nations surrounding Israel and Judah, others of a domestic nature. This chart shows only those events that are mentioned in the Bible and that are of importance to an understanding of the prophetic messages.

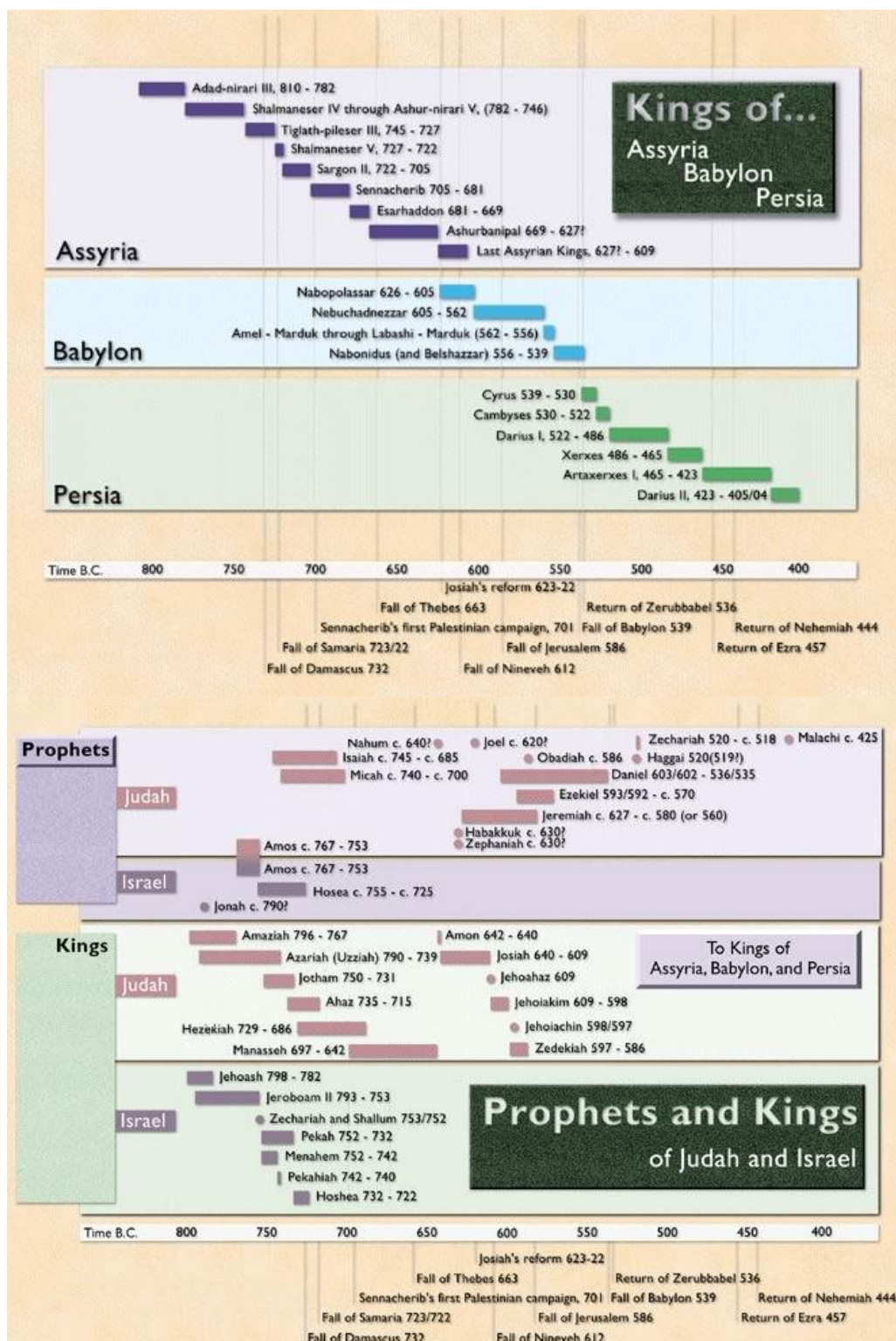
The following brief summaries contain the evidence on which the various prophets have been entered in the chronological positions in which they are found in the chart.

Isaiah

Isaiah was the great forerunner of the writers. This fact is recognized by the various New Testament writers, who quoted Isaiah more than 90 times. Isaiah was a prophet of the southern kingdom, living in a critical period of his nation. He played an important role during two momentous periods: (1) under Ahaz, during the war between Syria and Israel (chapters 7-11), and (2) under Hezekiah, during a siege of Jerusalem by Sennacherib (chapters 36; 37). Encouraging Hezekiah and the people through his own trust in God, he was instrumental in saving Jerusalem.

His early ministry seems to have coincided with the last years of King Uzziah's reign (see Introduction to Isaiah), but his official call to the office of a prophet came in 740/39, the last year of King Uzziah (chapter 6:1). Continuing faithfully under the following three kings, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah (chapter 1:1), he seems to have been fiercely hated by Manasseh, Hezekiah's wicked son. When Manasseh came to the throne as sole ruler upon his father's death, approximately in 686, he lost little time in removing the

faithful seer. According to Jewish tradition Isaiah was sawn asunder. It is possible that Hebrews 11:37 refers to this event.



Isaiah's whole ministry from Uzziah to Manasseh must therefore have lasted more than half a century.

Jeremiah

The life story of Jeremiah is better known than that of any other prophet. He belonged to a family of priests whose home town was Anathoth. Jeremiah had been chosen by God for his office before birth (chapter 1:5), and was called to be a prophet at a tender age (chapter 1:6, 7). Although the Hebrew term *na'ar*, "youth," or "child," by which the prophet designates himself verse (6), does not give an indication of Jeremiah's exact age at the time of his call, the context of the passage in which this word appears seems to favor the interpretation that he was still very young, perhaps less than twenty. This call came to him in the 13th year of King Josiah (chapters 1:2; 25:3), about 627. Josiah was also still a young king, having reached the age of but 21 years at that time.

Living in a crisis period of his nation, Jeremiah was called to proclaim many messages of reproof and solemn predictions of doom over his people for their disobedience. During the reign of Jehoiakim he nearly lost his life for his bold messages, and hence went into hiding (chapter 36:26). During the reign of Zedekiah, Judah's last king, Jeremiah was thrown into prison, being considered a traitor to his country (chapter 37:11-16) because he advised his people to surrender to the Babylonians. After Jerusalem's fall in 586, Nebuchadnezzar allowed Jeremiah to stay with the remnant of his people who were left in the country (chapter 40:1-6). After the murder of Gedaliah, the new governor of Judea, the Jews of Mizpah, fearing the revenge of Nebuchadnezzar, went to Egypt and took with them Jeremiah as well as his secretary Baruch (chapter 43:6).

In Egypt, Jeremiah raised his voice against the idolatries the Jews practiced there (chapters 43; 44). He probably died in the Nile country. A Jewish legend claims that he was stoned to death by his people. If chapter 52, a historical appendix, was written by the prophet, he must have lived until 561, when Jehoiachin was released from prison by King Evil-Merodach of Babylon (see chapter 52:31). In this case, he was an octogenarian. Those who think that chapter 52 was added as an inspired postscript by Jeremiah's secretary or one of his disciples, believe that he died some 20 years earlier, about 580 B.C. The chart allows both ideas, indicating his possible ministry during the two decades preceding 560 B.C. by means of a broken line.

Ezekiel

The prophet Ezekiel, a priest, was one of the 10,000 Jews taken into exile by Nebuchadnezzar in 597 B.C., when King Jehoiachin was carried to Babylon. In the 5th year of Jehoiachin's captivity, 593/92, Ezekiel had his first vision by "the river Chebar," a canal near the famous city of Nippur in lower Babylonia (chapter 1:1-3). Enigmatic is his statement that this 5th year of captivity was also the "thirtieth year." It is believed that the prophet refers either to his own age or to that year as the 30th year reckoned from the reform which took place during the 18th year of Josiah.

Several of the prophet's messages are dated exactly, and the last of these dated prophetic messages was received in the 27th year of Ezekiel's captivity (chapter 29:17), 571/70. This leaves Ezekiel with a ministry of at least 22 years, from 593/92 to 571/70. However, it is possible that some of his undated

prophecies were given at a later time. Hence the year 571/70 must not be considered as necessarily marking the end of his ministry.

Daniel

Daniel was taken to Babylon in 605 B.C., during the accession year of Nebuchadnezzar (see on chapter 1:1). But it was not until his 3rd year in captivity, the 2nd year of Nebuchadnezzar, that young Daniel gave the first proofs of his prophetic calling (chapters 1:5, 17; 2:1, 19). Hence, the year 603 can be considered as the beginning of Daniel's ministry as a prophet.

For some time he held a high position in Nebuchadnezzar's government (chapter 2:48), and became a trusted counselor of the great king. Under Nebuchadnezzar's successors Daniel's service seems not to have been desired. However, he is again found playing a role on the night of Babylon's fall, as interpreter of the mysterious handwriting on the wall (chapter 5). Shortly after this event he once more rose to a high position of honor and responsibility in the newly formed Persian Empire (chapter 6).

All the visions of Daniel recorded in chapters 7-12 were received during the last years of his life, the first one (chapter 7) in Belshazzar's 1st year (552 or possibly later), and the last one (chapters 10-12) in the 3rd year of Cyrus, 536/35 B.C. It was probably at this time, when Daniel was nearly 90 years of age, that he was commanded to conclude his book and seal it up (chapter 12:4, 13). For these reasons Daniel's extended prophetic ministry can be dated approximately from 603 to 535 B.C.

Hosea

The prophet Hosea was a citizen of the northern kingdom of Israel, whose ruler, Jeroboam II, is called by the prophet, "our king" (chapters 1:1; 7:5). A comparison between some of his prophecies and those of Amos indicates that Hosea was a younger contemporary of Amos (cf. Hosea. 4:3 with Amos 8:8; Hosea 4:15 with Amos 5:5; and Hosea 8:14 with Amos 2:5). Having begun his ministry in the time of Uzziah, king of Judah, and Jeroboam II, king of Israel (chapter 1:1), Hosea continued until the time of Hezekiah, king of Judah (chapter 1:1). However, all his messages were addressed to the northern nation.

The book makes no reference to the fall of Samaria, which took place in 723/22 B.C., and it can therefore be concluded that the prophet's last message was given prior to Samaria's destruction. For these reasons his ministry can be dated from about 755 (or earlier) to about 725 B.C.

Joel

Nothing is known of the prophet Joel beyond the fact that he was the son of Pethuel (chapter 1:1). His work is characterized by skill in the use of language, a well-balanced syntax, and a lively and impressive poetry. Yet the book contains no clear indication of the time in which the prophet lived. It is impossible to date the devastating plague of locusts that the prophet so vividly describes and compares with the terrors of the coming day of judgment. Scholars differ widely in their views concerning the time of Joel's ministry. The older generation place him in the 9th century B.C., whereas most commentators are now

inclined to assign him either to the time of King Josiah or to the postexilic period. Since no conclusive evidence for any of these three views exists, all are presented here:

1. The 9th-century view - The great empires of Assyria and Babylonia do not appear within the horizon of the prophet. Hence, he seems to have labored at a time before Assyria played a role in Palestinian affairs. Since the hostile acts of the heathen peoples committed against Judah (chapter 3:4 ff.) seem to refer to those recorded in 2 Kings 8:20-22 and 2 Chronicles 21:8-10, 16, while nothing points to the troubles caused by Hazael, as narrated in 2 Kings 12:17, 18 and 2 Chronicles 24:23, 24, it has been concluded that Joel gave his messages during the time lying between these two events. It is thought, furthermore, that his ministry fell in the years when the high priest Jehoiada acted as regent for the child king Joash (2 Kings 11:17 to 12:2), which fact would explain why the king is not mentioned anywhere in the book, while at the same time the Temple service flourished.

2. The 7th-century view - This view holds that Joel's ministry seems to fit into the early years of Josiah, when Assyrian power was nearing its end and Babylon was still a weak kingdom. Hence no reference to these two kingdoms was made by the prophet. Since Josiah came to the throne as a child, he must have lived under a regent, which explains why no king is mentioned by Joel. Furthermore, the fact that the people of Tyre and Sidon do not appear as hostile nations of Judah until the last decades of its history, while they are mentioned by Joel as Judah's enemies, seems also to point to a late date for the prophet's ministry. To this can be added the mention of Greeks (chapter 3:6), who hardly played a role in Near Eastern history earlier than the 7th century. For these reasons the 7th-century date for Joel has been adopted in this book, although there is no conclusive proof that this choice is correct.

3. The postexilic view - The absence of any reference to a king of Judah or to Assyria or Babylon, the reference to the hostility of Tyre and Sidon, and the mention of Greeks have been taken by some commentators as evidence for a postexilic date for Joel. However, there is also no reference made to Persia, which would be expected if the book was of so late a date. This fact weakens the arguments for such a late date.

Amos

Amos presents himself to his readers as a "herdsman" and a "gatherer of sycomore fruit" (chapters 1:1; 7:14). In the introduction to his book he declares that he worked under the kings Uzziah of Judah and Jeroboam II of Israel. Since only these two kings are mentioned, Amos seems to have prophesied during the time when both kings were sole rulers in their respective kingdoms. Uzziah was sole king over Judah from 767 to 750, and Jeroboam over Israel from 782 to 753. The ministry of Amos may therefore have fallen in the years 767-753 B.C. A closer dating is impossible in spite of the statement that his first divine message came to him "two years before the earthquake" (chapter 1:1), because the date of this event is unknown. However, that earthquake must have been very severe, for the memory of it was still fresh in the minds of people who lived 250 years later, as Zechariah 14:5 shows.

The prophet was a citizen of Judah, but delivered messages to the kingdom of Israel as well. Several of his messages were against various foreign nations. He went to Bethel, a sanctuary city of the northern kingdom, to deliver prophecies of warning, reproof, and doom to Israel.

Obadiah

The short book of Obadiah, consisting of only 21 verses, is not dated and its chronological setting is uncertain. Obadiah's prophecy, directed against Edom, presupposes that a looting of Jerusalem and a carrying away of many Jews into captivity had recently taken place. Some believe that the prophet refers to the conquest of Jerusalem at the time of King Jehoram (2 Kings 8:20-22; 2 Chronicles 21:8-10, 16, 17) in the 9th century; others believe that the prophet is speaking of Jerusalem's destruction by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C. That some of the words he uses are also found in Jeremiah (Obadiah 1, 3, 4; cf. Jeremiah 49:14, 16), and Joel (Obadiah 15, 17; cf. Joel 1:15; 2:1, 32) can hardly serve as evidence for either a late or an early date. The late date is taken here, without prejudice toward an early one.

Jonah

The prophet Jonah was a Galilean from Gath-hepher. His book contains no direct to establish the time of his mission to Nineveh. However, 2 Kings 14:25 states that Jonah also pronounced a prophecy concerning the expansion of Israel that was fulfilled by Jeroboam II. This prophecy must have been pronounced either before Jeroboam came to the throne (approximately 793 B.C.) or during the early years of his reign. Hence, Jonah was probably the earliest of the prophets under discussion.

So early a date for Jonah's ministry—about 790 B.C.—fits well into Assyrian history. The only period in which the mission of Jonah to Nineveh, with its results, seems to fit is the reign of Adad-nirari III (810–782). For a short time during his reign Assyria turned from its polytheistic religion to a kind of monotheistic Nabu worship.

Micah

Micah was a prophet from Moresheth-gath (chapter 1:1, 14), probably Tell ej-Judeideh in southwestern Judah. He should not be confused with Micaiah, the son of Imlah, a prophet of Israel in Ahab's time (9th century B.C.). Earlier commentators attempted to equate the two men, because of the use of similar expressions in their utterances (Micah 1:2; cf. 1 Kings 22:28). However, the chronological data given by Micah are against such an identification and show that a century or more lies between the two men. Micah states that his ministry fell in the time of the kings Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah (chapter 1:1). Since Jotham's sole reign began after the death of his father Uzziah in 740/39, the initial date for Micah's prophetic ministry should probably be placed after that date. He was therefore a somewhat younger contemporary of Isaiah, to whose vocabulary and terminology his prophecies show great similarity (Micah 4:1-4; cf. Isaiah 2:2-4). Also, Jeremiah (chapter 26:18), quoting Micah (chapter 3:12), testifies that Micah ministered during Hezekiah's time. All this leads to the conclusion that Micah prophesied from about 740 to about 700 B.C.

Nahum

Nahum is called the Elkoshite (chapter 1:1), but Elkosh is unknown as a place name, although commentators have tried to identify it with Elkesi in northern Galilee, Alkush near Mosul, and a town near Eleutheropolis in Judah. It is certain, however, that he lived and labored in the southern kingdom, and that his main prophecy dealt with Assyria in general and Nineveh in particular. No chronological data are given, but the prophet speaks of the fall of No (chapter 3:8) as an event of the past. This Upper Egyptian capital city, better known by its Greek name Thebes, was destroyed by King Ashurbanipal in 663 B.C., a date that provides the upper time limit of Nahum's prophecy. On the other hand, the destruction of Nineveh is described as an event still future (chapter 3:7). The Assyrian capital city of Nineveh was captured and destroyed by the combined forces of Media and Babylonia in 612 B.C., which is, accordingly, the latest possible date for Nahum. The prophet's vivid description of the catastrophe that had befallen Thebes leaves the impression that the event was still fresh in the memory of the people, whereas Assyria's power, although waning, was not yet near its end. Hence, 640 B.C., about midway between the two limits, marked by the destruction of Thebes and the fall of Nineveh, would seem to be a reasonable conjectural date for Nahum's prophetic ministry.

Habakkuk

Nothing is known concerning the prophet Habakkuk beyond his name. It is possible that he was a Temple singer, since his third chapter is dedicated to the "chief singer on my stringed instruments" (chapter 3:19). Although no chronological data are found in the book, certain statements permit a comparatively exact dating of Habakkuk's prophecies. The Temple is mentioned as still existing (chapter 2:20), which shows that the book was written before Nebuchadnezzar's destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. Furthermore, the rise of the Chaldeans and their invasion of the West is predicted, but this seemed at that time completely incredible (chapter 1:5-7). This situation fits best the time prior to the rise of the Chaldean Empire under Nabopolassar, who began to reign in 626/25 B.C., and who, with the Medes, was responsible for the destruction of Assyria. A date, possibly about 630 B.C., but before the Chaldeans had become a power of some importance, would seem most appropriate for the period of Habakkuk's prophetic activity.

Zephaniah

The prophet Zephaniah traces his genealogy back to an important personage by the name of Hizkiah, probably King Hezekiah (the names are the same in Hebrew) of Judah. He states that he ministered under King Josiah (chapter 1:1), who reigned from 640 to 609 B.C. Nineveh's destruction, which came in 612, is referred to as a future event, indicating that Zephaniah's work preceded this date. Furthermore, the repeated mention of Judah's wickedness, described as enormous in his day (see chapters 1:4-6, 8, 9, 12; 3:1-3, 7), points to the time before Josiah's reform, which began in 623/22. These observations seem to place Zephaniah in the early years of Josiah's reign, perhaps about 630 B.C., as a contemporary of Habakkuk.

Haggai

Haggai's courageous ministry was responsible for the resumption of the rebuilding of the Temple in the time of Darius I, after the work had ceased for some time (Ezra 4:24; 5:1). The book of Haggai contains four addresses, each bearing a precise date giving the day, month, and year of Darius' reign. The consecutive order of the book of Haggai would indicate that his whole recorded ministry lasted not longer than 3½ months, beginning (chapter 1:1) on August 29, 520 B.C., and extending, in his last two recorded speeches (chapter 2:10, 20), to December 18, 520. The work of no other prophet can be dated so definitely as that of Haggai.

Zechariah

Zechariah probably belonged to a priestly family (chapter 1:1; cf. Nehemiah 12:12, 16). His call came to him sometime in October/November, 520 B.C., in the same year as Haggai's first appearance (chapter 1:1). Several prophecies followed a few months later (Zechariah 1:7 to 6:15). Then came a pause in his activity of almost two years, at the end of which Zechariah received another divine message, on December 6, 518 (chapter 7:1), recorded in chapters 7 and 8. The remaining messages and prophecies, found in chapters 9-14, are not dated, a fact that prevents us from fixing the duration of the prophet's activity. While it is thus known that he began his work in 520 and continued until 518 B.C., the end of his prophetic ministry must be left open. The close of his ministry is tentatively set by some scholars at 510. It is possible that he worked much longer, as part of chapters 9-14 may have been given at a much later time.

Malachi

It is not known whether Malachi is the name of the author or simply the title of an otherwise anonymous author, since Malachi means "my messenger." If it is the latter, this is the only anonymous work among the prophetic books of the Old Testament. However, there is no valid reason why Malachi should not be considered a proper name. Not only is Malachi last in the sequential order of the prophets; it is also the last prophetic book produced in pre-Christian times. Its messages show that it was written after the time of the kingdom of Judah, when a governor ruled over the country (chapter 1:8), a fact that points to the Persian period. The Temple was apparently rebuilt, and sacrifices were regularly offered at the time of the prophet's activity (chapter 1:7-10). The various abuses rebuked by Malachi are mostly the same as those Nehemiah found when he returned to Jerusalem for his second term of governorship (Malachi 3:8, 9; cf. Nehemiah 13:10-12; Malachi 2:11-16; cf. Nehemiah 13:23-27).

Unfortunately, Nehemiah's second term as governor cannot be dated, which fact makes it also somewhat difficult to date Malachi. Nehemiah's first term lasted from 444 to 432 B.C. (chapter 5:14), after which he was recalled to Persia. There, he spent an unknown number of years before his return to Judea and his discovery of the abuses described in chapter 13. These were remedied by the vigorous actions of the governor. This leads us to conclude that Malachi's work may have followed Nehemiah's first term as governor, but preceded his return to Jerusalem from the Persian capital. Accordingly, the book can probably be dated about 425 B.C.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

THE ROLE OF ISRAEL IN OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECY

Introduction

This chapter surveys the fundamental problem of the interpretation of the prophetic portions of the Old Testament in terms of their message to Israel of old and to the church today. Consideration is given to the role of literal Israel as God's chosen people, to the way His plan for them was to have been accomplished, to the way in which it actually did work out, and to the eventual transfer of the privileges and responsibilities of literal Israel to spiritual Israel, that is, to the Christian church. A clear understanding of these aspects of the problem is essential to the formulation of a valid procedure for interpreting the messages of the Old Testament prophets. Any interpretation that fails to give these matters due consideration does violence to the Scriptures.

Few passages of Scripture are more commonly misunderstood and variously interpreted than those containing the divine promises made to ancient Israel through the prophets. It is an undeniable historical fact that, to this day, the majority of these predictions have not been fulfilled. In the endeavor to account for this seeming enigma, Bible expositors have set forth various explanations:

1. The modernist school of interpretation denies the predictive element in prophecy altogether, arguing either that the "predictions" were written down after the events thus "foretold" took place or that such "predictions" reflected nothing more than the prophet's hopes for the future, or those of his people.
2. The futurist school of interpretation contends that the many promises of restoration and world leadership made to ancient Israel are yet to be fulfilled in connection with the establishment of the modern state of Israel in Palestine.
3. The British-Israel movement teaches that the Anglo-Saxon peoples are the literal descendants of the ten so-called "lost tribes" of the northern kingdom and that the promises will, in large measure, be fulfilled to their modern posterity.
4. A less-well-defined school of interpretation bases its approach to the prophetic portions of the Old Testament on the theory that the prophet, while bearing messages to the people of his day, also took occasional excursions into the distant future, with the result that many of his forecasts did not apply to literal Israel at all, but were intended exclusively for "Israel after the spirit," that is, for the church today. Following this line of interpretation, some have gone to the extreme of proposing a Christian migration to Palestine.
5. Many believe that, generally speaking, the promises and predictions given through the Old Testament prophets originally applied to literal Israel and were to have been fulfilled to them on the condition that they obey God and remain loyal to Him. But the Scriptures record the fact that they disobeyed God and proved disloyal to Him instead. Accordingly, what He purposed to do for the world through Israel of old

He will finally accomplish through His church on earth today, and many of the promises originally made to literal Israel will be fulfilled to His remnant people at the close of time.

The modernist school of interpretation bases its position on the a priori assumption that any knowledge of the future is impossible, and ignores all evidence to the contrary. The futurist school ignores both the conditional element pervading predictive prophecy, clearly and emphatically proclaimed by the prophets themselves, and the specific statements of the New Testament that affirm that the privileges and responsibilities of ancient Israel have, in Christ, been transferred to the church. The exposition of Scripture attempted by proponents of the British-Israel theory consists of an admixture of selected Bible passages with legend, folk tales, and speculation. The fourth school of interpretation may, at times, arrive at a valid application of the predictive portions of Old Testament prophecy to the church today and to its future experience, but neglects the primary application of these messages to their historical setting, and proceeds, quite arbitrarily, to determine that certain selected passages were written more or less exclusively for the church today. In one way or another each of these attempts at interpreting the messages of the Old Testament prophets neglects significant teachings of Scripture, evades fundamental principles of exegesis, and provides a distorted picture of the predictive sections of prophecy. The following discussion sets forth the principles of interpretation described under “5,” and followed by this commentary, together with the scriptural basis on which these principles rest.

Israel as God’s Chosen People

With the call of Abraham, God set in operation a definite plan for bringing the Messiah into the world and for presenting the gospel invitation to all men (Genesis 12:1-3). In Abraham God found a man ready to yield unqualified obedience to the divine will (Genesis 26:5; Hebrews 11:8) and to cultivate a similar spirit in his posterity (Genesis 18:19). Accordingly, Abraham became in a special sense the “Friend of God” (James 2:23) and “the father of all them that believe” (Romans 4:11). God entered into solemn covenant relationship with him (Genesis 15:18; 17:2-7), and his posterity, Israel, inherited the sacred trust of being God’s chosen representatives on earth (Hebrews 11:9) for the salvation of the entire human race. Salvation was to be “of the Jews,” in that the Messiah would be a Jew (John 4:22), and by the Jews, as messengers of salvation to all men (Genesis 12:2, 3; 22:18; Isaiah 42:1, 6; 43:10; Galatians 3:8, 16, 18).

At Mt. Sinai God entered into covenant relation with Israel as a nation (Exodus 19:1-8; 24:3-8; Deuteronomy 7:6-14) upon the same basic conditions and with the same ultimate objectives as the Abrahamic covenant. They voluntarily accepted God as their sovereign, and this constituted the nation a theocracy. The sanctuary became God’s dwelling place among them (see Exodus 25:8), its priests were ordained to minister before Him (Hebrews 5:1; 8:3), its services provided an object lesson of the plan of salvation and prefigured the coming of the Messiah (1 Corinthians 5:7; Colossians 2:16, 17; Hebrews 9:1-10; 10:1-12). The people might approach God personally and through the ministry of a mediating priesthood, their representatives before Him; He would direct the nation through the ministry of prophets, His appointed representatives to them. From generation to generation these “holy men of God” (2 Peter 1:21) called Israel to repentance and righteousness and kept alive the Messianic hope. By divine appointment the sacred writings were preserved, century after century, and Israel became their custodian (Amos 3:7; Romans 3:1, 2).

The establishment of the Hebrew monarchy did not affect the basic principles of the theocracy (Deuteronomy 17:14-20; 1 Samuel 8:7). The state was still to be administered in the name, and by the authority, of God. Even during the Captivity, and later under foreign tutelage, Israel remained a theocracy in theory if not fully in practice. Only when its leaders formally rejected the Messiah and declared before Pilate their allegiance to “no king but Caesar” (John 19:15) did Israel as a nation irrevocably withdraw from the covenant relationship and the theocracy.

Through Israel of old, God planned to provide the nations of earth with a living revelation of His own holy character and an exhibit of the glorious heights to which man can attain by cooperating with His infinite purposes. At the same time, He permitted the heathen nations to “walk in their own ways” (Acts 14:16), to furnish an example of what man can accomplish apart from Him. Thus, for more than 1,500 years, a great experiment designed to test the relative merits of good and evil was conducted before the world. Finally, “it was demonstrated before the universe that, apart from God, humanity could not be uplifted,” and that “a new element of life and power must be imparted by Him who made the world”.

The Ideal: How the Plan Was to Operate

God placed His people in Palestine, the crossroads of the ancient world, and provided them with every facility for becoming the greatest nation on the face of the earth. It was His purpose to set them “on high above all nations of the earth” (Deuteronomy 28:1), with the result that “all people of the earth” would recognize their superiority and call them “blessed” (Malachi 3:10, 12). Unparalleled prosperity, both temporal and spiritual, was promised them as the reward for putting into practice the righteous and wise principles of heaven (Deuteronomy 4:6-9; 7:12-15; 28:1-14). It was to be the result of wholehearted cooperation with the will of God as revealed through the prophets, and of divine blessing added to human efforts.

The success of Israel was to be based on and to include:

1. Holiness of character (Levites 19:2; see on Matthew 5:48). Without this, the people of Israel would not qualify to receive the material blessings God designed to bestow upon them. Without this, the many advantages would only result in harm to themselves and to others. Their own characters were to be progressively ennobled and elevated, and to reflect more and more perfectly the attributes of the perfect character of God (Deuteronomy 4:9; 28:1, 13, 14; 30:9, 10). Spiritual prosperity was to prepare the way for material prosperity.

2. The blessings of health. Feebleness and disease were to disappear entirely from Israel as the result of strict adherence to healthful principles (see Exodus 15:26; Deuteronomy 7:13, 15; etc.)

3. Superior intellect. Cooperation with the natural laws of body and mind would result in ever-increasing mental strength, and the people of Israel would be blessed with vigor of intellect, keen discrimination, and sound judgment. They were to be far in advance of other nations in wisdom and understanding. They were to become a nation of intellectual geniuses, and feebleness of mind would eventually have been unknown among them.

4. Skill in agriculture and animal husbandry. As the people cooperated with the directions God gave them in regard to the culture of the soil, the land would gradually be restored to Edenic fertility and beauty (Isaiah 51:3). It would become an object lesson of the results of acting in harmony with moral, as with natural, law. Pests and diseases, flood and drought, crop failure—all these would eventually disappear. See Deuteronomy 7:13; 28:2-8; Malachi 3:8-11.

5. Superior craftsmanship. The Hebrew people were to acquire wisdom and skill in all “cunning work,” that is, a high degree of inventive genius and ability as artisans, for the manufacture of all kinds of utensils and mechanical devices. Technical know-how would render products “made in Israel” superior to all others. See Exodus 31:2-6; 35:33, 35.

6. Unparalleled prosperity. “Obedience to the law of God would make them marvels of prosperity before the nations of the world,” living witnesses to the greatness and majesty of God (Deuteronomy 8:17, 18; 28:11-13).

7. National greatness. As individuals and as a nation God proposed to furnish the people of Israel “with every facility for becoming the greatest nation on the earth” (see Deuteronomy 4:6-8; 7:6, 14; 28:1; Jeremiah 33:9; Malachi 3:12). He purposed to make them an honor to His name and a blessing to the nations about them.

As the nations of antiquity should behold Israel’s unprecedented progress, their attention and interest would be aroused. “Even the heathen would recognize the superiority of those who served and worshiped the living God”. Desiring the same blessings for themselves, they would make inquiry as to how they too might acquire these obvious material advantages. Israel would reply, “Accept our God as your God, love and serve Him as we do, and He will do the same for you.” “The blessings thus assured Israel” were, “on the same conditions and in the same degree, assured to every nation and to every individual under the broad heavens” see Acts 10:34, 35; 15:7-9; Romans 10:12, 13; etc.). All nations of earth were to share in the blessings so generously bestowed upon Israel.

This concept of the role of Israel is reiterated again and again throughout the Old Testament. God was to be glorified in Israel (Isaiah 49:3) and its people were to be His witnesses (chapters 43:10; 44:8), to reveal to men the principles of His kingdom. They were to show forth His praise (chapter 43:21), to declare His glory among the heathen (chapter 66:19), to be “a light to the Gentiles” (chapters 49:6; 42:6, 7). All men would recognize that Israel stood in a special relationship to the God of heaven (Deuteronomy 7:6-14; 28:10; Jeremiah 16:20, 21). Beholding Israel’s “righteousness” (Isaiah 62:1, 2), “the Gentiles” would “acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed” (Isaiah 61:9, 10; cf. Malachi 3:12), and their God the only true God (Isaiah 45:14). To their own question, “What nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them?” the Gentiles would answer, “Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people” (Deuteronomy 4:7, 6). Hearing of all the advantages with which the God of Israel had blessed His people and “all the prosperity” He had procured for them (Jeremiah 33:9), the pagan nations would admit that their own fathers had “inherited lies” (chapter 16:19).

The material advantages that Israel enjoyed were designed to arrest the attention and catch the interest of the heathen, for whom the less obvious spiritual advantages had no natural attraction. They would “gather themselves together” and “come from far” (Isaiah 49:18, 12, 6, 8, 9, 22; Psalms 102:22). “from the ends of the earth” (Jeremiah 16:19), to the light of truth shining forth from the “mountain of the Lord” (Isaiah

2:3; 60:3; 56:7; cf. chapter 11:9, 10). Nations that had known nothing of the true God would “run” to Jerusalem because of the manifest evidence of divine blessing that attended Israel (chapter 55:5). Ambassadors from one foreign country after another would come to discover, if they might, the great secret of Israel’s success as a nation, and its leaders would have the opportunity of directing the minds of their visitors to the Source of all good things. From the visible their minds were to be directed to the invisible, from the seen to the unseen, from the material to the spiritual, from the temporal to the eternal. For a graphic picture of how one nation would have responded to the irresistible appeal radiating from an Israel faithful to God, see Isaiah 19:18-22; cf. Psalms 68:31.

Returning to their homelands, the Gentile ambassadors would counsel their fellow countrymen, “Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord” (Zechariah 8:21, 22; cf. 1 Kings 8:41-43). They would send messengers to Israel with the declaration, “We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you” (Zechariah 8:23). Nation after nation would “come over” (Isaiah 45:14), that is, “be joined with” and “cleave to the house of Jacob” (chapter 14:1). The house of God in Jerusalem would eventually “be called an house of prayer for all people” (chapter 56:7), and “many people and strong nations” would “come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before” Him “in that day” and be His people (Zechariah 8:22; 2:11). The “sons of the stranger [or Gentile, 1 Kings 8:41; see on Exodus 12:19, 43]” would “join themselves to the Lord, to serve him, and to love the name of the Lord” (Isaiah 56:6; Zechariah 2:11). The gates of Jerusalem would be “open continually” to receive the “wealth” contributed to Israel for the conversion of still other nations and peoples (Isaiah 60:1-11, RSV; Psalms 72:10; Isaiah 45:14; Haggai 2:7, RSV). Eventually, “all the nations” would “call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord” and “be gathered unto it,” not to “walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart” (Jeremiah 3:17). “All who ... turned from idolatry to the worship of the true God, were to unite themselves with His chosen people. As the numbers of Israel increased, they were to enlarge their borders, until their kingdom should embrace the world” (cf. Daniel 2:35). Thus Israel was to “blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit” (Isaiah 27:6).

These promises of prosperity and a successful mission were to have “met fulfillment in large measure during the centuries following the return of the Israelites from the lands of their captivity. It was God’s design that the whole earth be prepared for the first advent of Christ, even as to-day the way is preparing for His second coming”. In spite of Israel’s ultimate failure, a limited knowledge of the true God and of the Messianic hope was widespread when the Saviour was born (see on Matthew 2:1). If the nation had been faithful to its trust and had appreciated the high destiny reserved for it by God, the whole earth would have awaited the coming of the Messiah with eager expectancy. He would have come, He would have died, and would have risen again. Jerusalem would have become a great missionary center, and the earth would have been set ablaze with the light of truth in one grand, final appeal to those who had not as yet accepted the invitation of divine mercy. God’s call to the nations would have been, “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth” (Isaiah 45:22). See on Zechariah 1:8.

Had Jerusalem known what it was her privilege to know, and heeded the light that Heaven sent her, she would have stood forth in magnificent prosperity, “the queen of kingdoms,” “the mighty metropolis of the earth”, and would, like a noble vine, have filled “the face of the world with fruit” (Isaiah 27:6). “Had Israel as a nation preserved her allegiance to Heaven, Jerusalem would have stood forever, the elect of God” (Jeremiah 7:7; 17:25).

After the great final call to the world to acknowledge the true God, those who persisted in refusing allegiance to Him would unite together with the “evil thought” of laying siege to the city of Jerusalem and taking it by force of arms, in order to appropriate to themselves the material advantages with which God had blessed His people (Ezekiel 38:8-12; Jeremiah 25:32; Joel 3:1, 12; Zechariah 12:2-9; 14:2; cf. Revelation 17:13, 14, 17). During the siege, reprobate Israelites would be slain by their foes (Zechariah 13:8; 14:2). In the prophetic picture God is represented as gathering the nations to Jerusalem (Joel 3:1, 2; Zephaniah 3:6-8; cf. Ezekiel 38:16, 18-23; 39:1-7). He has a controversy with them because they have rebelled against His authority (Jeremiah 25:31-33), and He will judge (Joel 3:9-17) and destroy them there (Isaiah 34:1-8; 63:1-6; 66:15-18). Any “nation and kingdom” that would “not serve” Israel was to “perish” chapter (60:12). “Those nations that rejected the worship and service of the true God, were to be dispossessed”, and Israel would “inherit the Gentiles” chapter (54:3).

The earth would thus be rid of those who opposed God (Zechariah 14:12, 13). He would be “king over all the earth” verses (3, 8, 9), and His dominion “from sea even to sea,” even to “the ends of the earth” (chapter 9:9, 10). In that day “every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts” (Zechariah 14:16; cf. chapter 9:7; Isaiah 66:23).

Israel’s Failure to Carry Out God’s Plan

God provided Israel with “every facility for becoming the greatest nation on the earth”. When they “brought forth wild grapes” instead of the mature fruit of character, He inquired, “What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?” (Isaiah 5:1-7). There was nothing God could have done for them that He did not do, yet they failed. It was “their unwillingness to submit to the restrictions and requirements of God” that “prevented them, to a great extent, from reaching the high standard which He desired them to attain, and from receiving the blessings which He was ready to bestow upon them”.

Those in Israel who put forth their best efforts to cooperate with the revealed will of God realized, personally, a measure of the benefits He had promised. Thus it had been with Enoch (Genesis 5:24), Abraham (chapter 26:5), and Joseph (chapter 39:2-6). Thus it was with Moses, of whom, to the very day of his death, it could be said that “his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated” (Deuteronomy 34:7). Thus it was with Daniel, “a bright example of what man may become, even in this life, if he will make God his strength and wisely improve the opportunities and privileges within his reach” (see Daniel 1:8-20). Thus it was also with Samuel, Elijah, John the Baptist (see on Matthew 3:4), John the Beloved (see on Mark 3:17), and many others. The life of Christ is a perfect example of the character of God would have His people develop (see on Luke 2:52). “Higher than the highest human thought can reach is God’s ideal for His children. Godliness—godlikeness—is the goal to be reached”.

The glorious era of David and Solomon marked what might have been the beginning of Israel’s golden age). One royal visitor to Jerusalem exclaimed, “The half was not told me!” (1 Kings 10:1-9). The glory that distinguished the early part of the reign of Solomon was due in part to his own faithfulness during that time, and in part to the fact that his father David had seemed to appreciate fully Israel’s exalted privileges and responsibilities (see Psalms 51:10, 11; Isaiah 55:3; cf. Acts 13:22).

Before the Israelites entered the Promised Land, God warned them not to forget that the blessings they were to enjoy there if they cooperated with Him would come as divine gifts (see Deuteronomy 8:7-14), not primarily as the result of their own wisdom and skill (verses 17-19). Solomon made his great mistake when he failed to realize the secret of Israel's prosperity, and with a few noteworthy exceptions, leaders and people sank lower and lower from generation to generation until apostasy was complete (Isaiah 3:12; 9:16; Jeremiah 5:1-5; 8:10; Ezekiel 22:23-31; Micah 3).

The kingdom was divided following Solomon's death (see 1 Kings 11:33-38). This division, though tragic, served to insulate, for a time, the southern kingdom, Judah, from the tide of idolatry that soon engulfed the northern kingdom, Israel (see Hosea 4:17). In spite of the bold and zealous efforts of such prophets as Elijah, Elisha, Amos, and Hosea, the northern kingdom rapidly deteriorated and was eventually carried into Assyrian captivity. Its people were given "no promise of complete restoration to their former power in Palestine".

Had Judah remained loyal to God its captivity would not have been necessary. Again and again He had warned His people that captivity would be the result of disobedience (see Deuteronomy 4:9; 8:9; 28:1, 2, 14, 18; Jeremiah 18:7-10; 26:2-16; Zechariah 6:15; etc.). He had told them that He would progressively diminish their strength and honor as a nation until they should all be carried away into captivity (Deuteronomy 28:15-68; 2 Chronicles 36:16, 17). God designed that Israel's experience should prove to be a warning to Judah (see Hosea 1:7; 4:15-17; 11:12; Jeremiah 3:3-12; etc.). But Judah failed to learn the lesson, and a little more than a century later her apostasy, also, was complete (see Jeremiah 22:6, 8, 9; Ezekiel 16:37; 7:2-15; 12:3-28; 36:18-23). The kingdom was overturned (Ezekiel 21:25-32) and the people removed from the land, which had been theirs only by virtue of the covenant relationship (Hosea 9:3, 15, Micah 2:10; cf. Hosea 2:6-13). Deported to Babylon, they were to learn in adversity the lessons they had failed to learn during times of prosperity (Jeremiah 25:5-7; 29:18, 19; 30:11-14; 46:28; Ezekiel 20:25-38; Micah 4:10-12), and to impart to the heathen Babylonians a knowledge of the true God.

God did not forsake His people, even during the Captivity. He would renew His covenant with them (Jeremiah 31:10-38; Ezekiel 36:21-38; Zechariah 1:12, 17; 2:12), including its accompanying blessings (Jeremiah 33:3, 6-26; Ezekiel 36:8-15). All that had been promised might yet come to pass if they would only love and serve Him (Zechariah 6:15; cf. Isaiah 54:7; Ezekiel 36:11; 43:10, 11; Micah 6:8; Zechariah 10:6). According to His beneficent purpose, the covenant promises were to have "met fulfillment in large measure during the centuries following the return of the Israelites from the lands of their captivity. It was God's design that the whole earth be prepared for the first advent of Christ, even as to-day the way is preparing for His second coming".

It is important to note that all the Old Testament promises looking forward to a time of restoration for the Jews were given in anticipation of their return from captivity (see Isaiah 10:24-34; 14:1-7; 27:12, 13; 40:2; 61:4-10; Jeremiah 16:14-16; 23:3-8; 25:11; 29:10-13; 30:3-12; 32:7-27, 37-44; Ezekiel 34:11-15; 37; Amos 9:10-15; Micah 2:12, 13; etc.). Daniel himself so understood these promises (Daniel 9:1-8). Captivity, he said, had "confirmed" the "curse" that came because of disobedience (verses 11, 12) and Jerusalem lay desolate (verses 16-19). Then Gabriel came to reassure him of the restoration of his people and the eventual coming of the Messiah (verses 24, 25). But, said the angel, Messiah would be rejected and "cut off," because of the abominations of Israel, and Jerusalem and the Temple would once more lie waste (verses 26, 27). Between the return from Babylon and the rejection of the Messiah, Israel was to

have its second and final opportunity as a nation to cooperate with the divine plan (see Jeremiah 12:14-17). “Seventy weeks”—490 years of literal time—were “determined” upon the Jews, “to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness” (Daniel 9:24).

Eventually, however, it became apparent that the Jews would never measure up to the standard God required of them, as Malachi makes evident (chapters 1:6, 12; 2:2, 8, 9, 11, 13, 14, 17; 3:7, 13, 14). Formal worship took the place of sincere religion (cf. John 4:23, 24; 2 Tim. 3:5). Human traditions came to be honored in place of the revealed will of God (see on Mark 7:6-9). Far from becoming the light of the world, the Jews “shut themselves away from the world as a safeguard against being seduced into idolatry” (see Deuteronomy 11:26, 27; cf. Mark 7:9). In their meticulous attention to the letter of the law they lost sight of its spirit. They forgot that God abhors a multiplication of the forms of religion (Isaiah 1:11-18; Hosea 6:6; Micah 6:7; Malachi 2:13), and asks of man nothing “but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly” with his God (Micah 6:8; cf. Matthew 19:16, 17; 22:36-40). Yet in mercy, God still bore with His people, and in due time Messiah came (Malachi 3:1-3). To the very last, “Christ would have averted the doom of the Jewish nation if the people had received Him”. When the probationary period of 490 years ended, the nation was still obdurate and impenitent, and as a result forfeited its privileged role as His representative on earth.

Why Israel Failed

Israel’s “unwillingness to submit to the restrictions and requirements of God, prevented them, to a great extent, from reaching the high standard He desired them to attain, and from receiving the blessings He was ready to bestow upon them”. They cherished the idea that they were favorites of Heaven, and were ungrateful for the opportunities so graciously afforded them. They forfeited God’s blessing because of failure to fulfill His purpose in making them His chosen people, and thus brought ruin upon themselves.

When Messiah came, His own people, the Jews, “received him not” (John 1:11). They blindly “overlooked those scriptures that point to the humiliation of Christ’s first advent, and misapplied those that speak of the glory of His second coming. Pride obscured their vision [see Luke 19:42]. They interpreted prophecy in accordance with their selfish desires”, because their ambitious hopes were fixed on worldly greatness. They looked for Messiah to reign as a temporal prince (cf. Acts 1:6), to appear as a liberator and conqueror, and to exalt Israel to dominion over all nations (see on Luke 4:19). They would have no part in all that Christ stood for (see on Matthew 3:2, 3; Mark 3:14). They eagerly sought the power of His kingdom, but were unwilling to be guided by its principles. They grasped at the material blessings so generously offered them, but refused the spiritual graces that would have transformed their lives and fitted them to be His representatives. They brought forth “wild grapes” rather than the mature fruit of a Godlike character (Isaiah 5:1-7; cf. Galatians 5:19-23), and because of this failure to bear the fruit expected of them, forfeited their role in the divine plan (see Romans 11:20).

Having declined, thus, to surrender themselves to God as His agents for the salvation of the human race, the Jews, as a nation, became “agents of Satan” for the destruction of the race. Instead of becoming light bearers to the world they absorbed its darkness and reflected that darkness instead. They were doing no positive good; therefore they were doing incalculable harm, and their influence became a savor of death.

“In view of the light they had received from God, they were even worse than the heathen, to whom they felt so much superior”. “They rejected the Light of the world, and henceforth their lives were surrounded with darkness as the darkness of midnight”.

In these tragic events the words of Moses met their final and complete fulfillment: “As the Lord rejoiced over you to do you good, and to multiply you; so the Lord will rejoice over you to destroy you, and to bring you to nought; and ye shall be plucked from off the land whither thou goes to possess it. And the Lord shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other” (Deuteronomy 28:63, 64). The completeness and finality of this rejection is evident from chapter 8:19, 20: “As the nations which the Lord destroyeth before your face, so shall ye perish; because ye would not be obedient unto the voice of the Lord your God.” The rejection of Jesus by the leaders of Israel (cf. Isaiah 3:12; 9:16) meant the permanent, irrevocable cancellation of their special standing before God as a nation (cf. Jeremiah 12:14-16).

At the time of the Babylonian captivity God had specifically announced that that experience was not to mark “a full end” of Israel as God’s people (Jeremiah 4:27; 5:18; 46:28). But when the Jews rejected Christ there was no such assurance of reinstatement. The present-day return of the Jews to Palestine and the establishment of the modern state of Israel do not imply reinstatement as God’s people, present or future. Whatever the Jews, as a nation, may do, now or in time to come, is in no way related to the former promises made to them. With the crucifixion of Christ they forever forfeited their special position as God’s chosen people. Any idea that the return of the Jews to their ancestral home, that is, to the new state of Israel, may in any way be related to Bible prophecy is without valid scriptural foundation. It ignores the plain statements of the Old Testament that God’s promises to Israel were all conditional.

The Nature and Purpose of Conditional Prophecy

God’s word is sure (Isaiah 40:8; 55:11; Romans 11:29), and His plan for the salvation of man will ultimately prevail (Isaiah 46:10). With Him there is “no variableness, neither shadow of turning” (James 1:17). He is “the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever” (Hebrews 13:8). His word “endureth for ever” (1 Peter 1:25). Eventually God’s purposes will prevail and the plan of salvation will succeed, irrespective of the failure of any person or group. The plan itself never changes because God never changes. But the manner in which it is carried out may change because man may change. The fickle, human will is the weak, unstable factor in conditional prophecy. God may reject one nation or group of people in favor of another if those first summoned persistently refuse to cooperate with Him (see Jeremiah 18:6-10; cf. Daniel 5:25-28; Matthew 21:40-43; 22:3-10; Luke 14:24). For illustrations of the reversal of threatened judgment, see Jonah 3:3-10; cf. 2 Kings 20:1-5; and of promised blessing, see Exodus 6:2-8; cf. Numbers 14:26-34. The covenant with literal Israel proved faulty, not because God failed to carry out His part of the covenant, but rather because Israel’s fair promises proved evanescent as the morning dew (Hosea 6:4; 13:3; Hebrews 8:6, 7). It should be remembered that God does not force the human will, and that Israel’s cooperation was essential to the success of His plan for the nation.

God’s promises are made conditional upon man’s cooperation and obedience. “The promises and threatenings of God are alike conditional”. Again and again God warned Israel that blessing goes hand in hand with obedience and that a curse accompanies disobedience (see Deuteronomy 4:9; 8:19; 28:1, 2, 13,

14; Jeremiah 18:6-10; 26:2-6; Zechariah 6:15; etc.). Continued obedience was necessary to the continuance of divine favor, whereas persistent disobedience must inevitably culminate in the rejection of the Jewish nation as God's chosen instrument for carrying out the divine plan (Deuteronomy 28:15-68). Owing to the failure of the Jews as God's chosen people, many of the prophecies of the Old Testament, such as those affirming the worldwide mission of Israel and the ingathering of the Gentiles (see Genesis 12:3; Deuteronomy 4:6-8; Isaiah 2:2-5; 42:6; 49:6; 52:10; 56:6, 7; 60:1-3; 61:9; 62:2; Zechariah 2:11; 8:22, 23; etc.), those pointing forward to the eternal rest in Canaan (Isaiah 11:6-9; 35; 65:17-25; 66:20-23; Jeremiah 17:25; Ezekiel 37; 40-48; Zechariah 2:6-12; 14:4-11), and those promising deliverance from her enemies (Isaiah 2:10-21; 24-26; Ezekiel 38; 39; Joel 3; Zephaniah 1; 2; Zechariah 9:9-17; 10-14; etc.), have never been and can never be fulfilled to them as a nation.

Had Israel measured up to the noble ideal, all of the promises contingent upon obedience would long since have been fulfilled. Predictions of national disgrace, rejection, and woe that were to result from apostasy would never have been realized. But because of apostasy it was the predictions of national honor and glory that could not be fulfilled. Yet, since God's purposes are immutable (Psalms 33:11; Prov. 19:21; Isaiah 46:10; Acts 5:39; Hebrews 6:17; etc.), success must and will come—through Israel after the spirit. Though, on the whole, literal Israel failed to realize her exalted destiny, the chosen race did make a worth-while, though imperfect, contribution to the preparation of the world for the first advent of the Messiah (see on Matthew 2:1). Furthermore, it should be remembered that the Messiah, after the flesh, was a Jew, that the charter members of the Christian church were all Jews, and that Christianity grew out of Judaism.

Spiritual Israel Replaces Literal Israel

The formal rejection of Jesus by the Jews, as a nation, marked the close of their last opportunity as the special agents of God for the salvation of the world. It was "last of all" that God "sent unto them his son," according to Christ's own words (Matthew 21:37), but they "caught him" and "slew him" (verse 39). Thereafter, God "let out his vineyard [see Isaiah 5:1-7] unto other husbandmen" who would "render him the fruits in their seasons" (see on Matthew 21:41). Upon His final departure from the sacred precincts of the Temple, Jesus said, "Your house is left unto you desolate" (Matthew 23:38). The day, before, He had called it "my house" (chapter 21:13), but henceforth He no longer owned it as His. Jesus' own verdict was, "The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Matthew 21:43; cf. 1 Peter 2:9, 10).

The transition from literal Israel to spiritual Israel, or the Christian church, is the subject of Romans 9-11. Here Paul affirms that the rejection of the Jews did not mean that the promises of God had "taken none effect" (Romans 9:6), and explains immediately that they are to become effective through spiritual Israel. He quotes Hosea 2:23. "I will call them my people, which were not my people" (Romans 9:25, 26). Spiritual Israel includes both Jews and Gentiles (verse 24). Peter concurs, saying, "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons," for "in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him" (Acts 10:34, 35; cf. chapter 11:18). Many years later, in writing to the "strangers," or Gentiles (1 Peter 1:1; see on Exodus 12:19, 43), as the "elect" of God (1 Peter 1:2), Peter refers to them as the "chosen" ones of God, a "holy nation, a peculiar people" (chapter 2:9), formerly "not a people," but "now the people of God" (verse 10). Paul states the same truth in Romans 9:30, 31, where he makes it

plain that the Christian church has replaced the Hebrew nation in the divine plan. Henceforth, he says, there is no difference between “Jew” and “Greek” (chapter 10:12, 13).

Paul emphasizes the fact that the rejection of literal Israel as God’s chosen instrument for the salvation of the world does not mean that individual Jews can no longer be saved (chapters 9:6; 11:1, 2, 11, 15), for he is a Jew himself (chapters 9:3; 10:1; 11:1, 2). But they are to be saved as Christians and not as Jews. It is true, he says, that national Israel “stumbled” at the “stumblingstone,” Jesus Christ (Romans 9:32, 33; 11:11; cf. 1 Peter 2:6-8; 1 Corinthians 1:23) but this need not mean that they are to fall—“God forbid,” he exclaims (Romans 11:1, 22). Literal Jews may still find salvation by being grafted into spiritual Israel, in precisely the same way that Gentiles are to be grafted in (verses 23, 24). “All Israel” consists of both Jews and Gentiles, thus “all Israel shall be saved” (Romans 11:25, 26). Paul makes it clear beyond argument that when he speaks of “Israel” as the chosen people of God he means it in this sense. He says specifically that by “Jew” he does not mean a literal Jew but one converted at heart, whether he be Jew or Gentile (chapter 2:28, 29). All who have faith in Christ are one in Him, and, as a the spiritual “seed” of Abraham, are “heirs according to the promise” (Galatians 3:9, 28, 29).

“That which God purposed to do for the world through Israel, the chosen nation, He will finally accomplish through His church on earth to-day”. The glorious promises originally made to literal Israel are meeting their fulfillment today in the proclamation of the gospel to all men (Revelation 14:6, 7). “The blessings thus assured to Israel are, on the same conditions and in the same degree, assured to every nation and to every individual under the broad heavens”. “The church in this generation has been endowed by God with great privileges and blessings, and He expects corresponding returns. ... In the lives of God’s people the truths of His word are to reveal their glory and excellence. Through His people Christ is to manifest His character and the principles of His kingdom”. Now it is spiritual Israel, in the past “not a people” but “now the people of God,” that are to “shew forth the praises” of the One who has called them “out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1 Peter 2:9, 10).

We should never forget that “whatsoever things were written aforetime were written” for the “learning” of future generations to the end of time, to inspire patience, comfort, and hope (Romans 15:4). They were “written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come” (1 Corinthians 10:11).

The prophets did not always clearly understand messages they themselves had borne pointing forward to the distant future, to the coming of the Messiah (1 Peter 1:10, 11). These repeated Messianic predictions were designed to lift the eyes of the people from the transitory events of their own time to the coming of Messiah and the establishment of His eternal kingdom, in order to afford them a view of the things of time in the light of eternity. However, these messages pertaining to the then-distant future were intended, not only to inspire patience, comfort, and hope in the day they were first given, but also to provide men of Christ’s day with confirming evidence of His Messiahship. The profound conviction that the messages of the prophets had been fulfilled led many to believe in Christ as the Son of God. The prophets thus provided a firm foundation for the faith of the apostolic church and made a direct and vital contribution to the Christian faith.

It was therefore not alone “unto themselves” and to their contemporaries that the prophets ministered, but also to all sincere men and women of later generations (1 Peter 1:12). It is ever the privilege of those who witness the fulfillment of prophecy to “remember” and “believe” (John 13:19; 14:29; John 16:4). Prophecies that Inspiration clearly applies to our day were designed of God to inspire us with patience,

comfort, and the hope that all things foretold by these holy men of old will soon meet their final and complete fulfillment.

Conclusion: Principles of Interpretation

In general, Old Testament promises and predictions were addressed to literal Israel and were to have been fulfilled to them, conditional on obedience. Partial compliance on their part with the will of God made possible a partial fulfillment of the covenant promises on God's part. Yet many of the promises, particularly those concerning the giving of the gospel to the nations and the establishment of the Messianic kingdom, could not be fulfilled to them because of their unfaithfulness, but would be fulfilled to the church on earth preparatory to Christ's return, particularly to God's remnant people, and in the new earth.

When the Jews rejected Christ as the Messiah, God in turn rejected them and commissioned the Christian church as His chosen instrument for the salvation of the world (Matthew 28:19, 20; 2 Corinthians 5:18-20; 1 Peter 2:9, 10; etc.). Accordingly, the covenant promises and privileges were all permanently transferred from literal to spiritual Israel (Romans 9:4; cf. Galatians 3:27-29; see on Deuteronomy 18:15). Promises not already fulfilled to literal Israel either would never be fulfilled at all or would be fulfilled to the Christian church as spiritual Israel. Prophecies that fall into the latter classification are to be fulfilled in principle but not necessarily in every detail, owing to the fact that many details of prophecy were concerned with Israel as a literal nation situated in the land of Palestine. The Christian church is a spiritual "nation" scattered all over the world, and such details obviously could not apply to it in a literal sense. Prophecies of the former classification cannot now be fulfilled because they were strictly conditional in nature and limited in scope, by their very nature, to literal Israel.

The fundamental principle by which we can tell unerringly when any particular promise or prediction of the Old Testament made originally to literal Israel is to meet its fulfillment with respect to spiritual Israel is—when a later inspired writer makes such an application of it. For instance, the prophecy of the battle of Gog and Magog in Ezekiel 38, 39 was never fulfilled to literal Israel; but John the revelator assures us that in principle, though not necessarily in all details (such as those of Ezekiel 39:9-15), this battle will occur at the close of the millennium (Revelation 20:7-9). But to go beyond that which is clearly set forth by Inspiration—in the immediate context of the passage concerned, in the New Testament, or in the Spirit of prophecy—is to substitute personal opinion for a plain "Thus saith the Lord." Where Inspiration has not thus clearly spoken it is our privilege to compare scripture with scripture in an endeavor to understand more perfectly the mind of the Spirit. But here, as in all exposition of Scripture, we should avoid affirming as the explicit teachings of the Bible that which is our private, finite view, however plausible it may appear to be. Furthermore, Old Testament prophecy must first be examined in terms of its historical application to literal Israel before the validity of a derived application to spiritual Israel may be undertaken.

One of the main objectives of the Bible commentator is to reconstruct the historical setting in which the declarations of the prophets were originally made. Christianity is a historical religion, and its inspired messages are anchored to the hills and valleys, the deserts and rivers, of the ancient world, and to literal

men and women who once walked the earth. There is no surer protection against the speculative vagaries of religious visionaries than a clear knowledge of the historical context of Scripture.

Though the prophet looked at events about him, he also could see far beyond his own day. In a mysterious way known only to God the prophet's words were sometimes intended to meet their fulfillment in the then far-distant future. At times they had an import, not only for the age in which the prophet lived, but also for a day far future; in other words, they had a dual application. Similarly, the ways in which God dealt with men in crises of the past are often cited as examples of the manner in which He will deal with all the world in the last day (see on Deuteronomy 18:15). For example, the judgment that came upon Sodom and Gomorrah, literal cities of the ancient past, is used by Bible writers as descriptive of the judgment God will eventually bring upon all the world.

The student of the Bible who hopes to secure from it the greatest help will first proceed to reconstruct the historical context of each passage. He will listen to the prophet speaking to Israel of old and endeavor to understand what his words meant to the people who originally heard them. But he will listen also for the further import the prophet's words may have for later times, particularly, our time. Indeed, this secondary application is for us today the more significant. But it is only against the background of the original historical context of the message that its meaning and value for us can be established with certainty.

A study of the Old Testament prophets that consists primarily of lifting selected passages here and there out of their historical context and arbitrarily applying them to our day—as if the prophet spoke exclusively for our benefit—is fraught with grave danger. In fact, this procedure is responsible more than anything else for the fanciful interpretations that distinguish the teachings of certain religious groups.

In an age when every wind of doctrine is blowing it is well to make certain that our understanding of Bible prophecy rests upon a positive “Thus saith the Lord” (see Deuteronomy 29:29; Isaiah 50:11; Jeremiah 2:13; Matthew 7:24-28; 1 Corinthians 2:4, 5, 12, 13; Eph. 4:14; Colossians 2:2-4, 8; 2 Peter 1:16; Revelation 22:18). In so doing we shall be secure against the fanciful explanations sometimes given certain Old Testament prophecies. We shall be protected against the grossly literal explanation of some expositors concerning the return of literal Israel to literal Palestine to rule the world for a thousand years prior to the close of human probation, and also against other equally unscriptural interpretations that propose to apply allegorically to the church all the details of the promises originally made to literal Israel. Both of these extreme methods wrest the obvious intent of the Scriptures and render a sound understanding of the messages of the prophets for the church today unattainable.

The following simple rules are suggested as a safe approach to the study of each prophetic passage of the Old Testament:

1. Examine the prophecy in its entirety. Note by whom it was spoken, to whom it was addressed, and the circumstances that called it forth. Remember that—generally speaking—it was originally given with respect to the historical circumstances that called it forth. It was ordained of God to meet the needs of His people at the time it was given and to remind them of the glorious destiny that awaited them as a nation, of the coming of the Messiah, and of the establishment of His eternal kingdom. Discover what the message meant to the people of that time. (This rule does not apply to those portions of the book of Daniel that the prophet was bidden to “shut up” and “seal,” or to other passages whose application Inspiration may have limited exclusively to our own time.)

2. Observe the conditional aspects of the prediction and ascertain whether or not, or to what extent, the conditions were met.
3. Discover what application later inspired writers make of the prophecy, and on this basis determine its possible significance for God's people in this time.
4. Remember that the record of God's dealings with His people in ages past has been recorded for the benefit of all later generations to the end of time. Our study of messages originally proclaimed by holy men of old to the people of their day is not to become an end in itself, but a means of discovering the will of God for all who would render Him truehearted service now, at the climax of the ages. The voice of God through the prophets distinctly speaks to us today.

If these rules are consistently followed the resulting interpretation can be accepted with confidence. In the inspired utterances of the prophets of old the sincere seeker for truth will thus find messages of inspiration, comfort, and guidance for today.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

THE TIME PERIOD BETWEEN THE TESTAMENTS

Introduction

Between the close of the Old Testament and the beginning of the narrative of the New Testament stretches a period of approximately four centuries. An understanding of the vicissitudes through which the Jews passed during this time, with special emphasis on their history under the later Seleucid rulers and during the years that witnessed the rise of Roman power in the Mediterranean, is necessary to a proper appreciation of the New Testament, particularly the Gospels. This chapter summarizes briefly the experiences of the Jews under the waning power of Persia and during the protracted struggle for control of the Palestine between the Seleucids to the north and the Ptolemies to the south. More detailed consideration is given to developments growing out of attempts by Antiochus Epiphanes to Hellenize the Jews, to the extension of Roman power throughout the Mediterranean world, and to the political situation in Palestine under the Hasmonaeans and under the Herod the Great.

The Jews Under the Persians During the 4th Century

Nehemiah and After - Historical records of the Jews during the 5th century B.C. have been scanty, but extra-Biblical evidence is gradually coming to light. According to the Elephantine papyri Johanan was high priest in 410 B.C. and a Persian by the name of Bagoas (Bagoses, Bagohi, Bigvai) was appointed governor of Judea at least by 407 B.C. (Olmstead thinks he was Nehemiah's successor).

This Bagoas, mentioned in the Elephantine papyri as the governor of Judea in the days of Sanballat (and therefore of Nehemiah), lived nearly a century earlier than the eunuch Bagoas who was a commander of Artaxerxes III against Egypt and who later became Persia's kingmaker. It is possible to harmonize the incidents connected with Nehemiah's governorship, involving several men who later became high priests, and the statements of Josephus about Bagoas and Johanan, etc.

The Persians did not interfere with the Jewish religion, although the Zoroastrians, to whom fire was sacred, felt it was a desecration to burn flesh in the flames. This may possibly be one of the reasons why Bagoas had put a fine of 50 drachmas on every lamb offered on the Temple altar in Jerusalem, although the quarrel with the Jewish high priest would seem a sufficient reason. In Egypt the Jews of Elephantine offered sacrifices in their temple until it was destroyed by the Egyptians. In the Egypt the Persian dislike of animal sacrifices would be supported by the Egyptians, who worshiped some of the animals offered by the Jews in Elephantine. When the local ruler was absent, therefore, the Egyptians destroyed this Jewish temple. It lay in ruins for some time while the Jews sought, first through Johanan, then through Bagoas, for permission to rebuild. Bagoas, in giving this permission, authorized only meal offerings and incense for the new temple.

Dangers to the Jewish Religion - The returned Jews during the reign of Artaxerxes I were probably acquainted with the teaching of Zoroastrianism, since it was the official religion of the Persian Empire. Nehemiah and other leaders probably realized the necessity of exercising care lest the common people confuse the worship of Jehovah with that of Ahura-Mazda. Both Persians and Jews believed that there would come a great judgment day, when the God of righteousness would vanquish the adversary of all good, and that then the righteous would be given a blessed abode under new conditions.

The Persians arranged their two opposing spirits, the righteous Ahura-Mazda, and the evil Ahriman, in a dualism that tended to make them equal. The Jews, through their sacred literature, spoke much of one eternal all-powerful God, and very little of a distinctly inferior evil adversary who had at one time been created perfect (Ezekiel 28:14-19), but who later became the author of all sin.

A Rival Religion in Samaria - The Jews returning to Jerusalem were opposed when they tried to set up standards of worship at variance with the popular concepts of the half-pagan peoples who had settled in the land during the Captivity. Thinking of them as narrow and bigoted fanatics, Sanballat and Tobiah made every effort to thwart their plans. A son of Joiada the priest was banished by Nehemiah because of his marriage to the daughter of Sanballat. This may have been the Manasseh mentioned by Josephus (see on Nehemiah 13:28, 29), whom Sanballat of Samaria welcomed and made priest of a rival Samaritan temple on Mt. Gerizim. The result was a rival Samaritan cult, which is mentioned in the New Testament (John 4:20), and still survives in a remnant numbering a few hundred souls.

The Development of Jewish Tradition - Such opposition as that of the Samaritans gave great impetus to the study and exaltation of the Torah (Pentateuch) on the part of the Jews, who set about strictly enforcing all its requirements. Synagogues were established throughout the land. Readings from the Scriptures, presented in the Sabbath services, were translated or explained in Aramaic, which had become, during the Exile, the spoken language of the people. Through these explanations the rabbis guided the minds of the laity in what were considered proper interpretations of the Torah.

Under such conditions it was not at all strange that a body of traditional interpretation of the Scriptures gradually grew up, although the leaders disagreed among themselves on points of doctrine and procedure. Revived Jewish nationalism had driven them to study their sacred books, but they became confused as to the correct meaning of Scripture.

Instead of laying aside their preconceived opinions and letting the Spirit of God guide them into all truth, they hewed out for themselves broken cisterns of error from which to drink. These false concepts paved the way for the rejection of Christ by the leaders of His day. Here were laid the foundations of a complex body of tradition that was to dominate Jewish religion through subsequent centuries.

The Tradition of Jaddua and Alexander - For the reigns of Artaxerxes II (Mnemon), 405/04—359/58 B.C., and Artaxerxes III (Ochus), 359/58—338/37, when Johanan and Jaddua were high priests, there are few records concerning the Jews. Without doubt antagonism continued.

Josephus mentions an incident connected with the campaign of Alexander, which, though many scholars label it unhistorical, is here given because of its possible bearing on Daniel's prophecy of Greece, and because it is not inherently impossible if an early date for Daniel is accepted.

The story goes (Josephus Antiquities xi. 8. 4, 5 [325–339]) that from Tyre Alexander went to Jerusalem en route to Egypt and was shown the prophecy of Daniel (probably chapter 8:21); that he was so impressed by it that he granted the Jews great favors, not only for themselves but also for their kinsfolk in lands he might conquer in the future. It is true that Josephus, referring to Sanballat and Darius III as contemporaries, confuses this story with the one about the marriage of Sanballat's daughter to a son of Joiada (Nehemiah 13:28), but it is not impossible that this or another Jaddua was high priest in Alexander's time and that such an incident could have occurred. God could direct Alexander as easily as He could Cyrus in the days of Daniel.

Another incident led to Alexander's bestowal of favors on the Jews. The Samaritan leaders burned to death the governor, Andromachus, whom Alexander had stationed in Samaria to administer all Coele-Syria and Palestine. Upon his return from Egypt, Alexander avenged this outrage, gave certain border territory claimed by Samaria to the Jews, and granted them other privileges.

Rise of the Greeks and Macedonians

The Greek Background - Historically, the peoples living in Greece, on the islands of the Aegean Sea, and on the west coast of Asia Minor formed part of the successive waves of Indo-European peoples who came from the north east in the 2d millennium B.C. (see on Daniel 2:39). By the close of the 6th century a democratic form of city-state government was developed in Greece.

Each city was a direct, not a representative, democracy, in which all citizens met to vote on all issues. This was possible because each body of citizens was small (slaves and "strangers" of non-native descent, who had no political or social standing, formed the majority). These small, independent Greek states, which were developing democratic principles of administration, eventually challenged the autocratic power of Persia.

The Persian War With Greece - The Ionian Greek settlements on the eastern coast of the Aegean Sea, formerly under Lydia, were incorporated into the Persian Empire along with Lydia, though it took many years to reduce them to Persian control. Half a century after Cyrus the aid furnished to the revolting Ionians by the European Greeks evoked the vengeance of Persia.

The city-states in Greece, which had proved themselves incapable of any long-term concerted action because of bitter jealousies and intrigues, were thus driven to work together in the face of the Persian threat. The campaigns of Darius I and Xerxes against the Greeks ended in failure, first at Marathon in 490 B.C., later, in 480, at Salamis, and, in 479, at Plataea (see on Daniel 11:2).

About the same time, the Persians suffered serious losses at Mycale on the Ionian coast. Thus Greece was saved from the Persian Empire, and the Greeks of Ionia (the Aegean Islands and the west coast of Asia Minor) joined in a defensive league with the Athens and other Greek city-states that had participated in the Persian defeat.

This period of Athenian leadership was the Golden Age of Greek culture. In 431 began the Peloponnesian War, which spanned more than 25 years, in which Athens and Sparta struggled for supremacy and both

were supplanted by Thebes. This war weakened the Greek states still further and gave Persia an opportunity to play off Greek against Greek.

Alexander's Conquest of the Persian Empire



While Greece proper was embroiled in conflict the semi-Greek country of Macedonia to the north became a monarchical state and sought to expand its territory. About the time that Artaxerxes III (Ochus) became king of Persia, 23-year-old Philip II came to the throne of Macedonia and started the formation of a national army. He soon gained supremacy over nearly all of Greece. But before his plan for a united Greek-Macedonian attack on Persia could be executed, Philip was assassinated.

Alexander the Great - Philip left the torch of conquest to be carried by his 20-year-old son, Alexander the Great (see on Daniel 2:39; 7:6). Within two years of his accession Alexander was able to secure the backing of all Greece and Macedonia in an alliance against the Persian Empire. With his Macedonian army he pushed eastward around the Aegean, crossed the Hellespont, and won his first important battle at the Granicus River (334). He then rapidly deprived Persia of her source of revenue from all Asia Minor. Darius, coming up the Euphrates, met him at Issus, near the north eastern corner of the Mediterranean. There the Persians were routed (333). Alexander next pushed on through Syria and Palestine, taking all

the main cities (in 332 Tyre stood a seven-month siege). He marched toward Egypt, assured of a warm reception, for that country had despised Persian control since the days when their cities and temples had been so ruthlessly destroyed. Gladly the Egyptians threw their gates open to Alexander as their liberator (332) and crowned him as Pharaoh. He, in turn, joined them in their worship of Egyptian deities. Egypt acclaimed him as a god and offered him worship as the true son of Amen-Ra. He founded Alexandria and then returned, in the spring of 331, through Syria to push on eastward.

Crossing the Euphrates and the Tigris, he met Darius and his army in October, 331, on the plain of Gaugamela in a battle more popularly known by the name of the neighboring town of Arbela. Here the Persian forces met a disastrous defeat, Darius himself fleeing to Ecbatana in Media. Then in rapid succession came the surrender of Babylon, Susa, and Persepolis. After burning Persepolis, Alexander started to Ecbatana in pursuit of Darius, early in 330, only to find that he had escaped to the east. Pursuing farther, Alexander found only the corpse of the great king, who had been slain by his own men.

He gave Darius a royal burial, and then proceeded with his expedition, going as far as the Jaxartes and Indus rivers during the next three years. In 326 he crossed the Indus and penetrated northern India as far as his men would follow him, then returned via the coast (325) to Susa, where celebrations were held at the founding of a new world monarchy (324) designed to fuse East and West through Greek civilization. To cement the union of Greek and Persian peoples, Alexander and some of his Macedonian officers took Persian wives. He founded many Greek cities over the vast empire. In 323 the king was in Babylon to supervise the organization of an Arabian expedition, and while there contracted a fever that proved fatal. He died June 13, 323 B.C., having reigned in Philip's place for slightly less than 13 years.

While changing the face of the world in so short a time he had not tried to change the religion of his conquered peoples. Persian Zoroastrianism continued, and has lived on through the centuries. The Egyptians, the Jews, the Greeks, kept their religions. But the thinking of mankind in the whole Mediterranean world was affected by the spread of Hellenic (See NOTE) ideas and by Alexander's concept of a world empire of united races and peoples with a common language, literature, and culture. The Hellenistic period, ushered in by Alexander, paved the way for the Greco-Roman civilization, in which Judaism was modified and Christianity developed into a worldwide faith.

NOTE: The adjective Hellenistic means "Greek," referring to the history or culture of Greece. Hellenistic refers to the fusion of Hellenic and Oriental civilization initiated by Alexander. The Hellenistic period extended to the time of Roman supremacy.

Alexander's Successors and the Dissolution of His Kingdom

Alexander's Heirs Under Regents - The administration of the Persian territory just conquered was not easy task. Alexander's generals agreed to place on the throne Philip Arrhidaeus, the feeble-minded half brother of Alexander, as joint king with the infant Alexander, son of the Bactrian princess Roxana, born after his father's death. Macedonian leaders (mostly Alexander's generals) were appointed as governors throughout the empire. The conflicting interests of the generals, of Alexander's widow Roxana, of his mother Olympias, and of partisans of Philip Arrhidaeus led to a decade of wars and intrigue.

Antigonos Makes Strongest Bid for Empire - In the long and complex struggle for power among numerous contending "successors," the issues tended to center in the attempt of Antigonos to gain and

keep the power for himself. His chief opponents—Cassander in Macedonia, Ptolemy in Egypt, and Lysimachus in Thrace—formed an alliance proposed by Seleucus. After the struggle reached a stalemate in 312-311 B.C., the settlement of 311 left the principal territories of the empire in the hands of these five leaders. The next decade was filled with confusion of all kinds. Cassander put to death the child-king Alexander and his mother Roxana. For the attempt of Antigonus to win the whole empire for himself and for his ensuing struggle against Cassander, Lysimachus, Ptolemy, and Seleucus. This struggle came to a climax in 301 at the decisive battle at Ipsus in Phrygia, which the four allies won. Antigonus was slain and his territory divided.

The Fourthfold Division of the Empire - Thus, in 301, the question of a united empire versus separate kingdoms was settled. The strongest bid for unity had failed. In place of Alexander's one empire there were four independent Macedonian kingdoms, plus minor fragments (chiefly in Asia Minor). Seleucus' territory extended from Asia Minor nearly to the Indus, with capitals at Antioch on the Orontes, in Syria, and Seleucia on the Tigris, near the present city of Baghdad. Ptolemy of Egypt had regained the districts of Palestine and southern Syria. Lysimachus had not only Thrace but also a large portion of north western Asia Minor. Cassander held Macedonia and was busy trying to consolidate all of Greece. Demetrius' scattered holdings could not be considered a fifth kingdom.

The Hellenistic Kingdoms

It would be profitless to follow the rivalries, wars, and intrigues between these Hellenistic kingdoms and the family quarrels of their Macedonian ruling houses, whose complex intermarriages and changing alliances confuse the picture with similar names and petty details. A mere outline of the principal developments must suffice, to show how the four kingdoms became three and later fell one by one to Rome.

Lysimachus' Kingdom Eliminated - Not many years after the battle at Ipsus, in 301, Lysimachus gained control of two of the four divisions of the empire as they had been settled upon in 301—the western and the northern. But Lysimachus was defeated and killed in a war with Seleucus in 281, after which Ptolemy Ceraunus snatched the fruits of victory from the winner. In 280 he assassinated the victorious Seleucus, and seized Macedonia. Thus, although Seleucus briefly held the title to three of the four divisions, he actually never occupied Macedonia. His death left his son Antiochus I with what had been territories of Seleucus and Lysimachus. Macedonia was ruled by the house of Antigonus for more than a century, until it became a protectorate of Rome at the close of the third Macedonian war in 168 B.C., and finally a province of Rome in 146.

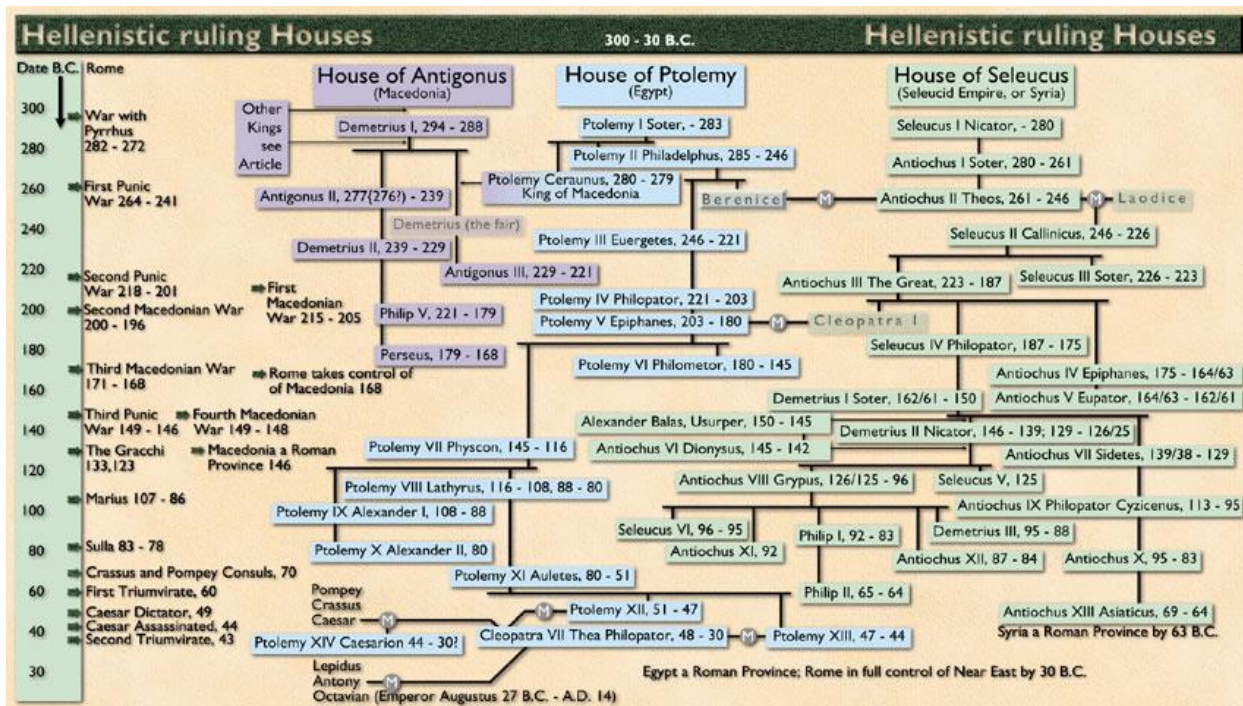
The Four Kingdoms Reduced to Three - Thus within about 40 years after Alexander's death, and 20 years after the division at Ipsus, his vast territory had passed through the hands of many claimants. Now, all the empire, except minor fragments, was under the control of three dynasties of Macedonian blood. The house of Ptolemy ruled Egypt; the house of Antigonus, replacing that of Cassander, had taken over Macedonia; the house of Seleucus held the east and the former territory of Lysimachus in the north.

In 279 the invading Gauls, an eastern wave of the barbarians well known by that name in Roman history, entered Macedonia and Greece, whence they were driven out. Some of them overran large parts of Asia Minor. Harbored by local kings who wished to harass the rulers of the Seleucid line, they plundered the

country for many years and extorted tribute. Finally after nearly half a century they were decisively defeated by the ruler of Pergamum, which later became the most important of the small states that grew out of fragments of Lysimachus' empire. Henceforth these Gauls were confined to the region of Asia Minor that took its name, Galatia, from them. This later became the Roman province in which Paul founded various churches and to which he wrote the epistle to the Galatians.

Although these small states retained their separate existence, nearly all the territory of Alexander's empire remained under the three strong Hellenistic kingdoms, Macedonia, Egypt, and the Seleucid empire (the last is often called Syria, because Antioch became its principal capital and its territory later shrank to Syria alone). These three kingdoms dominated the eastern Mediterranean until they were absorbed successively as provinces of the Roman Empire. Accordingly, many brief histories omit mention of the earlier fourfold division of Alexander's empire and refer only to the final stage of three kingdoms.

Palestine, situated on the corridor between Egypt and the Seleucid empire, remained for many years a bone of contention between "the king of the south" and "the king of the north." Hence the Ptolemies of Egypt and the Seleucid kings are more important to Biblical studies than Macedonia. Palestine was under the Ptolemies until about 200 B.C., when it fell to Seleucid control.



Ptolemy II Philadelphus and Antiochus I and II - Ptolemy II Philadelphus hoped to take Syria and make it, along with Palestine, a buffer state against aggression from the Seleucid empire. In 272 B.C. he forced Seleucus' successor, Antiochus I (280-262/61), (See NOTE) to give him control of much of the coastal lands in Asia Minor and Syria. For another decade Ptolemy aided Greece in its unsuccessful effort against Macedonian rule; then he signed a peace treaty with Antigonus II of Macedonia.

NOTE: After the death of Seleucus I his successors continued numbering the years from his reign instead of renumbering the years of each separate reign. Events were recorded in years of an era that began with the reign of Seleucus I, that is, from the campaign during which he retook Babylon in 312 B.C. This Seleucid Era was in contemporary use during the period of the Seleucid kings, and down into early Christian times—even much later among the Jews. Such a continuous reckoning of years was a new departure in Asian chronology, greatly facilitating the accuracy of historical dating. Later the Greeks used the Olympiads and the Romans the A.U.C. (ab urbe condita, “from the founding of the city”), but these were employed only by historians, not in ordinary dating.

The year 1 of the Seleucid Era was, in the official Seleucid reckoning by the Macedonian calendar, a lunar year beginning in the autumn of 312 B.C. But in Babylonia it was reckoned by Babylonian lunar years, from the spring of 311. Jewish practice may have varied between spring and fall reckoning, if we may judge from 1 and 2 Maccabees. It is generally believed that 1 Maccabees, which gives numerous dates in this era, reckons from the spring, but there is difference of opinion as to whether this spring year ran six months earlier or later or later than the corresponding Macedonian year. For this reason authorities often differ by a year in dating Jewish and Seleucid events in this period. For convenience this chapter utilizes the dates of 1 Maccabees by reckoning year 1 as 312/11 B.C., without any dogmatic assumption of exactness in all cases.

Palestine Under Hellenistic Rule

Palestine Under the Ptolemies - Soon after the death of Alexander, Ptolemy made Syria and Palestine tributary to Egypt. Antigonus subjugated these districts temporarily, and Palestine changed hands several times before 301. In this time of change and uncertainty many Jews left Palestine to settle in the new city of Alexandria, where the Jewish population eventually formed a large self-governing segment of that cosmopolitan capital, and became Hellenized to the extent of needing the Hebrew Scriptures translated into Greek.

After the Battle of Ipsus in 301, where Antigonus was slain, Syria fell to Seleucus; but Palestine, which Ptolemy had occupied, was left to Egypt, though Seleucus never gave up his claim to it. Judea learned to take advantage of the opportunity for intrigue with both sides. Under the Ptolemies the chief cities of Phoenicia and Palestine were considerably Hellenized, and new cities were established, with Greek forms of government. But Jerusalem remained the center of a Jewish state under the civil as well as the religious leadership of the high priest, who was the representative of the people in dealing with the king. There was also a council of elders derived, as some think, from the assembly of Nehemiah's day. Thus the lives of the people were still regulated by Jewish laws and customs, although there began a gradual process of absorption of Hellenism from the use of the Greek language and the contacts with the officials and the Greek settlers in the cities. This, however, developed slowly, and reached a climax under Antiochus IV.

From the beginning there was a constant war of intrigue and diplomacy, as well as intermittent fighting, among the three houses of Seleucus, Ptolemy, and Antigonus. In this struggle Ptolemy II Philadelphus relied on Palestine as a buffer state against Seleucus, hence his liberal gifts to the Jews.

Being literary-minded, Ptolemy II, with his counselors, began to collect books from other nations for his great library in Alexandria. Men of letters were welcomed in the city. According to Josephus, the king, at the request of the chief librarian, asked the high priest Eleazar to send Palestinian scholars to make a Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures. Thus the translation was begun that is now called the Septuagint. It is uncertain whether the version was made for an official presentation to the Alexandrian library or whether it was produced privately for the Alexandrian Jews. Only the Pentateuch was translated then, and other portions of the Old Testament canon were added later.

Josephus tells us that one of the Ptolemies made Joseph, a nephew of the high priest Onias I, tax collector for the whole area of Palestine, Coele-Syria, and Phoenicia, and showered favors upon him. Palestine was left largely to its own devices so long as the taxes were paid and the Egyptian authority recognized. Little is known of the details of this period, but it is evident that the Jews fared better than later, when the Seleucids took over the country. Yet there arose a party which was to give Palestine into the hands of the Seleucid house, little realizing what the future held for them.

In 221, the year in which Ptolemy III was succeeded by Ptolemy IV Philopator, Antiochus III (the Great) came into Palestine on his way against Egypt, but the venture was a failure. In 219 he took Seleucia on the Mediterranean. In 218 he succeeded in placing garrisons in various places in Palestine. In 217 Egypt met and defeated him in Raphia, south of Gaza. Tradition has it that Ptolemy IV visited Jerusalem, outraged the Jews by going into the holy of holies, and was smitten with superstitious terror. Egypt held Palestine for another decade or so. The invasions of Egyptian territory and the native uprisings within Egypt give clear evidence of the inefficiency of Ptolemy IV's administration. His death came just about the time when Rome and Philip V of Macedonia were signing a treaty of peace, and when Antiochus, who had been strengthening himself in Asia, was returning to Antioch.

In 203 Ptolemy IV was succeeded by his son Ptolemy V Epiphanes, who was only four years old. Egypt sought the help of Rome, but Philip V of Macedonia and Antiochus made an alliance against Ptolemy, and the Seleucid forces penetrated Palestine for the third time. In a decisive battle in 201/200 near Panium, not far from Mt. Hermon, the Egyptian forces were defeated. The result was that Egypt permanently lost Palestine to the Seleucid empire.

Palestine Under the Seleucid Empire - The Jews had changed masters, and it soon became clear that they did not profit thereby. The comparatively lenient policy of the Ptolemies was replaced by a closer supervision, a greater demand for taxes, interference in the appointment of the high priests, and later by religious persecution.

Antiochus III, who had come to the throne at a time when the Seleucid empire was weak, succeeded in extending its territory approximately to the original boundaries. Soon after he conquered Palestine he was confronted with the opposition of Rome, which was alarmed by his growing power and his alliance with Philip V of Macedonia. In 190 at Magnesia in Asia Minor, Antiochus was decisively defeated by Rome. He lost Asia Minor permanently and paid a large indemnity. One consequence of this was increased taxes extracted from Palestine. It is said that Antiochus' successor, Seleucus IV Philopator, trying to raise money to pay the Romans, attempted to confiscate the Temple treasure, but that his envoy, Heliodorus, was frightened off by supernatural apparitions (2 Maccabees 3:6-39).

The successor of Seleucus IV was Antiochus IV Epiphanes, notorious as the persecutor of the Jews. His efforts to conquer Egypt were blocked by Rome; his unsuccessful struggles with the Jews helped to weaken his empire within. From his time on there was a gradual decline, and a century later his kingdom was absorbed by the Roman Empire. Since Rome held an increasingly dominant position in the East in the time of Antiochus III and IV, it is necessary to turn attention to this new Western power before proceeding with the period of Antiochus IV Epiphanes.

The Rise of Rome to Dominance

The Early Growth of Rome - Rome, originally composed of several independent tribes living on a cluster of seven hills, became a city-state ruled by elective kings, with a senate or council of elders and an assembly representing the people. By about 500 B.C. the king was replaced by two consuls elected annually. During the 5th century the laws were codified. One important step in the rise of the common people was the appointment of tribunes of the people, officers who enjoyed personal inviolability and who had the power of veto over the magistrates in defense of the common people. During the time of Alexander's conquests to the east and the division of his empire among his successors, Rome was occupied with internal political struggles and with territorial expansion in Italy.

Soon after the conquest of Italy was complete Rome became involved in a protracted struggle with Carthage, a Phoenician colony on the North African coast that now loomed as Rome's most dangerous rival. Rome had formed alliances with districts all along the coast of Africa as far west as Spain and held a good portion of Sicily, where the war with Carthage (known as the First Punic War) began. It took Rome 23 years (264–241) to bring Carthage to her knees. The victor imposed a heavy indemnity and took Sicily, which became the first Roman province.

Soon after the peace treaty Carthage aroused Rome's jealousy and alarm by gaining a strong foothold in Spain. This led to the Second Punic War (218–201), as a result of which Carthage gave up Spain and most of her navy, paid heavy tribute, and promised not to make war without Rome's permission.

Roman Intervention in Macedonia - By 200 B.C., with Carthage, her only genuine rival, no longer a menace, Rome had become mistress of the western Mediterranean. The acquisition of foreign provinces gave her the beginnings of a genuine empire. Rome did not at first seek new territories in the East. But she was the strongest power in the Mediterranean; and in her efforts to protect herself, her trade, and her allies, she was drawn into one local issue after another until eventually she became acknowledged conqueror of the whole Mediterranean world.

In the step-by-step acquisition of the remains of Alexander's empire, Rome's first involvement was with Macedonia during the Second Punic War. Philip V of Macedonia attempted to assist Carthage, but Rome prevented this and formed alliances with certain Greek states and with Pergamum against Philip. This First Macedonian War (215–205) was followed by the Second Macedonian War (200–196). Rome defeated Macedonia at Cynoscephalae (197), and declared all Greece free. By breaking the power of Macedonia, Rome had merely weakened the rival of the Seleucid kingdom, and henceforth had to reckon with Antiochus III (the Great).

Rome and Antiochus the Great - While Rome and Philip were occupied in warfare, and Egypt was torn by native uprisings, Antiochus the Great invaded Syria and Palestine. With the battle at Panium, 201/200, Egypt had forever lost control of Palestine. It soon came completely under the rule of the house of Seleucus, and the fortunes of the Jews took a turn for the worse.

As soon as Antiochus had made peace with Egypt he invaded Greece, but was defeated at Thermopylae by the Romans and forced to flee back to Asia Minor. At Magnesia, near Smyrna, in 190, he was decisively defeated by the Romans. By the subsequent peace treaty the Seleucid kingdom had to pay a

large indemnity, and to give up all its holdings west and north of the Taurus range. Rome did not keep this conquered territory, but gave it to her allies, principally Pergamum and Rhodes.

Rome Ends the Macedonian Kingdom - Perseus, son of Philip V, was regarded as an enemy of Rome. Envoys sent to Macedonia kept returning with growing concern. Finally the murder of the king of Pergamum, while traveling in Greece, was made the occasion for a Third Macedonian War (171–168), in which, at the Battle of Pydna (168), Rome completely crushed Macedonia. She did not annex the territory, however, but divided it into four separate republics which she placed under her protection. Thus ended the ruling house of the Antigonids. The kingdom of Macedonia, one of the three surviving kingdoms of Alexander's former domain, was no more.

Rome and Antiochus IV Epiphanes - After his defeat by Rome, Antiochus the Great sent his son Antiochus (later called Epiphanes) there as a hostage. Eventually, however, Antiochus Epiphanes took the throne (175) of the Seleucid empire. While Rome was busy with the Third Macedonian War (which ended the Macedonian kingdom in 168), she had to meet another attempt of the Seleucid house to gain control of the Near East. Antiochus Epiphanes marched against Egypt. He was about to take the country when the envoy of the victorious Romans arrived with an ultimatum requiring Antiochus to leave Egypt, then an ally under the protection of Rome. Antiochus, who well understood Roman military power, withdrew.

Thus by 168 B.C. Rome had conquered one of the three surviving Hellenistic kingdoms, assumed protection of the second, and repulsed the third by the mere word of an envoy, although she did not annex any of their territory until some years later. The frustrated Antiochus returned from Egypt and turned his attention to the Jews.

Antiochus Epiphanes and the Jews

While in Greece Antiochus Epiphanes had become acquainted with Hellenic culture and was enamored of Greek sports, theatricals, and pageantry. When he came to power he was filled with dreams of uniting all the peoples of his empire by the common bond of Hellenistic culture. He made the mistake of trying to force what had until then been a natural and gradual development.

Gradual Hellenization of the Jews - It has been mentioned that the Jews who settled in Alexandria, soon after it was founded, became Hellenized during the period of Ptolemaic rule over Palestine. There were Jews in the principal cities of the empire, and even in Palestine many cities became centers of Greek culture of a sort. Those who dealt closely with officials had to use the Greek language, and many among the upper classes in Judea, including the leading priests, adopted Hellenistic dress and customs. The younger minority felt that the old faith and morals were out of date, but the mass of the people were inclined to distrust the new ways. In opposition there grew up a conservative party that stood for the strict observance of Judaism according to the Torah. These conservatives came to be known as the Hasidim (Chasidim or Assideans), or pious ones. The cleavage between these two parties of Jews, the Hasidim and the Hellenists, became a major controversy after the Seleucids took over. Onias III, a high priest early in the Seleucid period, was conspicuously pious, and a contender for traditional Judaism against the Hellenizing trend.

Onias' brother Jason, a Hellenizer, bribed Antiochus to make him high priest in Onias' place, and then set out to make Jerusalem a Greek city. But in a few years Antiochus sold the high priesthood to a higher bidder, this time to Menelaus, who was not even of the priestly tribe, but a Benjamite, and therefore not in favor with the people. Strife between the supporters of the different factions in Jerusalem gave Antiochus an opportunity to intervene. Josephus tells how the Hellenizers went to Epiphanes informing him of their wish to adopt the Hellenistic mode of living that he was fostering, and requesting permission to build a gymnasium in Jerusalem. This was particularly offensive to the conservatives, because in the gymnasium the athletes exercised in the nude, as did the Greeks. Soon the officials of the Temple were more interested in the public games than in the ministrations of their holy office. Greek names became popular. For example, Eliakim was changed to Alcimus, Joshua to Jason.

Hellenization Enforced by Antiochus - It was on his return from a campaign against Egypt that Antiochus Epiphanes entered Jerusalem, where he was warmly welcomed by the liberals. According to 1 Maccabees this was in 170/69 B.C., but there is difference of opinion as to the dating of his Egyptian campaigns, and even as to the method used in 1 Maccabees of reckoning the Seleucid Era. It was at some time between 170 and 168 that Antiochus visited Jerusalem, and to show his appreciation of the Hellenizing leaders there, he put to death many of the conservatives and a few who wished to return to Egyptian sovereignty. He was even permitted to take many of the Temple treasures.

In 168, some think in order to save face after his humiliation by the Romans in Egypt, Epiphanes marched into Palestine, and entering Jerusalem by treachery, plundered the Temple, stopped the morning and evening sacrificial offering, erected an idolatrous altar before the Temple for the sacrifice of swine, burned some of the buildings, and destroyed portions of the city wall. He built a fortress south of the Temple area in the old City of David and placed a garrison there. He ordered the Jews to cease their worship of Jehovah and offer worship instead to the Olympian Zeus and Dionysus, to cease circumcision, to disregard the Sabbath, to use the pig as both an article of diet and a victim of sacrifice, and to destroy the Torah. Josephus adds (*Antiquities* xii. 5. 5 [257–264]) that when the Samaritans saw the disgrace of Jerusalem they went to Epiphanes, disavowing any relationship to the Jews and asking to be permitted to call their sanctuary on Mt. Gerizim the Temple of Jupiter Hellenius. This was granted, and they were officially freed from any connection with the Jews. See on Daniel 11:14.

The Maccabees Revolt - Finding that the faithful chose death rather than resistance on the Sabbath day, the troops of Antiochus martyred many. Not only the Hasidim, but the rank and file of the people stood against this religious persecution. But very soon the opposition took a new form at the town of Modein, 18 miles (29 km.) north west of Jerusalem, about midway to Joppa. When Mattathias, a man of the priestly lineage, was commanded as leader of his district to initiate the service ordered by the king, he refused. He and his five sons slew another Jew who offered the idolatrous sacrifice, and the Syrian guard as well. Then, leaving their town, they fled to the wilderness, where they were joined by hundreds of loyal Jews who determined to be true to their faith. They used armed resistance on any day of the week. Thus a war between the Jewish nationalists and the Seleucid house was begun that ended only when the Jews achieved a measure of independence.

Judas Maccabaeus Restores the Temple Worship - On the death of Mattathias (167/66) the leadership fell to his son Judas, who took the surname Maccabaeus. Thus this family of patriots, originally the house of Hashmon (the Hasmonaeans), became known as the Maccabees. A Syrian army sent out to quell Judas

was defeated in two encounters, of which the second took place near Beth-horon. Antiochus Epiphanes, called east because of a Parthian uprising, commissioned Lysias to act for him in his absence, and to continue the war against Judas. In the first encounter at Emmaus (166/65), Judas Maccabaeus repulsed the enemy. Then Lysias tried to come at Jerusalem from the south. Judas was victorious again at Beth-sur (165), a few miles south west of Jerusalem. By the terms of peace arranged with Lysias, both Jewish factions were permitted to live in Jerusalem; Menelaus remained as high priest; the Temple was to be restored to the worship of God. All emblems of pagan worship were obliterated, and new burnt offering altar was erected. On the 25th of Chisleu (165), Judas had the Temple rededicated, and that day has ever since been memorialized by the feast known today as Hanukkah (feast of lights), referred to in the New Testament as the Feast of the Dedication (John 10:22). See on Daniel 11:14.

Josephus says that the restoration of the Temple “took place on the same day on which, three years before, their holy service had been transformed into an impure and profane form of worship. For the Temple, after being made desolate by Antiochus, had remained so for three years” (*Antiquities* xii. 7. 6 [320]). This he connects with “the prophecy of Daniel,” without identifying it. But Daniel’s prophecy fits a Roman oppressor, not a Macedonian, and, further, it speaks of 2300 days (see Daniel 8:9-14). Those who try to make the text say that 2300 “evenings and mornings” mean 1,150 literal days cannot make the interval equal either exactly $3\frac{1}{2}$ years or 3 years.

Therefore, for several reasons, Daniel cannot refer to the trouble wrought by Antiochus Epiphanes, but to some other far-reaching event that seems to have eluded the search of many a student from the time of Christ on. (For a study on this question see Daniel 8 and 9).

Antiochus Epiphanes found so much trouble in the east that he never returned to Antioch. Foiled in the attempt to loot the treasures in a temple of Nanai in Elymais, he escaped—unlike his father. Later he fell ill and died in Media (164/63). On his deathbed he appointed one of his associates, Philip by name, as regent for his young son, Antiochus V Eupator. When Philip returned to Antioch to contend with Lysias for the regency, he found that Lysias and the boy king had gone back to Palestine to quell factional uprisings. This time Lysias was engaged in defeating the forces of Judas at Bethzacharia, but just as he placed Jerusalem under siege he learned that Philip was already at Antioch claiming the regency. In the face of this threat Lysias hastily arranged terms of peace with Judas, whereby Menelaus the high priest was taken from office, brought to Antioch, and there put to death. Alcimus, who, though a descendant of Aaron, was not of the high priestly line, was appointed high priest in Menelaus’ place, but he was deposed by the people when it became known that he opposed Judas. The high priesthood thus suffered from the union of political with religious authority in one person.

There ensued conflict between Lysias and Philip for control of the boy king, revolts in the eastern provinces, and the arrival from Rome of Demetrius, son and rightful heir of Seleucus IV, who had 12 years before been cheated out of his throne by Antiochus IV. Warmly welcomed in Syria, Demetrius instigated the assassination of the boy king Antiochus V, thus depriving Lysias of his power, and as a result Demetrius I Soter gained the throne in 162/61.

Jews Seek Alliance With Rome - Judas Maccabaeus sought to strengthen the Hasmonaean cause by securing the friendship of Rome. Probably in 161 he obtained a treaty intimating friendship without assuring assistance in case of internal warfare. On the request of the Jewish Hellenizers, Demetrius sent a force to garrison Jerusalem, and to confirm in the high priesthood Alcimus, leader of the Hellenistic party

who had appealed to him for help. But the Hasmonaean bands still roamed the country, and won a victory over Nicanor at Adasa, near Beth-horon (162/61). Demetrius then sent a force large enough to crush the revolt. At Elasa, some ten miles north of Jerusalem, in 161, Judas Maccabaeus was killed. His brothers, with refugees from his army, fled to the desert. Both the Hasidim and the Hellenizers were tolerated under the Seleucid control. Alcimus died the following year, and the office of high priest may have been vacant for several years, probably because of factional strife.

Jonathan in Michmash - The Seleucid forces again returned in an attempt to destroy the Hasmonaean guerrillas. They fortified various cities, but found it more expedient to make peace with the new Maccabean leader, Jonathan, brother of Judas. Jonathan was given Michmash for the official residence of the Hasmonaeans, where they could live independent of the Hellenistic forces in Jerusalem. Here he spent some years strengthening his hold on the conservatives among his people, and eventually dominated all Judea outside Jerusalem.

The Maccabean Struggle for Independence

Jonathan Gains Control of Judea - The reign of Demetrius I did not last long. In a few years the upheavals in the Seleucid empire gave Jonathan an opportunity to strengthen the position of the Hasmonaean house and of Judea. Alexander Balas, a weakling sponsored by Attalus of Pergamum as the supposed son of Antiochus Epiphanes, was recognized by Rome and backed by Ptolemy VI Philometor of Egypt as claimant to the Seleucid throne against Demetrius I. In 153/52 he was established in Ptolemais, a port south of Tyre. Both rivals, seeking advantage through a buffer state in Palestine, offered inducements to Jonathan. Demetrius returned Jonathan's hostages, abandoned the garrisons in Judea, and finally offered complete freedom to the Hasmonaeans. Not to be outdone, Alexander Balas, by making Jonathan high priest in 153, won his support. Soon Alexander Balas with his allies defeated and killed Demetrius. Jonathan, the new high priest, went to Ptolemais to the wedding of the new king to Ptolemy's daughter, Cleopatra Thea (grand-daughter of the first Cleopatra, but not one of the seven queens of Egypt who bore that name). On this occasion Jonathan was made general and governor in Palestine. Thus the Maccabean, or Hasmonaean, house came into control of the Jewish nation in 151/50.

Jonathan Gains Foothold in Samaria - When the youthful Demetrius Nicator, son of Demetrius I, the real scion of the Seleucid house, entered northern Syria to depose Alexander Balas, Jonathan stood for Balas against the governor of Coele-Syria, who espoused the cause of Demetrius. In this fighting Jonathan took Joppa, Ashdod, and Ashkelon. But Ptolemy now repudiated Alexander Balas and gave Cleopatra to Demetrius, whom he installed as Demetrius II in 146. In the ensuing war both Balas and Ptolemy were killed. Demetrius II was unable to rule with a strong hand. In spite of complaints to the king from the garrison in Jerusalem and from the liberal Jews, Jonathan appeased the young Demetrius with costly gifts, and so was victorious. He was confirmed as high priest and was given control of several important districts in Samaria.

In 145 B.C., Tryphon, a military leader from Apamea, marched against Antioch, forced Demetrius back to the coastal cities, and enthroned the infant son of Balas and Cleopatra Thea as Antiochus VI. Jonathan, thinking that this turn of affairs offered further opportunity for the advancement of a Jewish state, made alliance with Antiochus VI through Tryphon. About this time he sent a new envoy to the Senate at Rome

in the hope of furthering the overtures made by Judas. Tryphon, making a pretense of friendliness, treacherously seized Jonathan and slew him, probably in 143/42; but, needing more men, Tryphon did not follow up this assassination. Returning to Antioch, he dethroned the child Antiochus VI and made himself dictator, but Demetrius II still held the coastal provinces.

Simon—High Priest, General, Prince - Jonathan's brother Simon at once took charge of the Hasmonaeans at Jerusalem. In retaliation for the murder of his brother, Simon threw his support to Demetrius II. In return the Jewish state was practically made free, all arrears in tribute being remitted and future tribute abolished. The Seleucid garrison in Jerusalem was starved into submission, and the Jews considered that the last hindrance to their independence had been removed, in 143/42. At the time of the feasts of the sixth month in 141 the people in formal assembly conferred the high priesthood on the house of Hashmon, and Simon received the title "High Priest and General and Ethnarch (Ruler of the People) of God." The Jewish state was now politically independent, and it began to expand further with the conquest of Joppa and Gazara (Gezer).

Palestine in the Maccabean Period



In 141/40 Demetrius II went to fight the Parthians, and soon was taken prisoner. Realizing what a valuable hostage he would make, the Parthians showed him every courtesy and gave him a daughter of the Parthian king. In 139/38 his brother Antiochus Sidetes entered Syria, hoping to drive out Tryphon and restore the kingdom to the house of Seleucus. Cleopatra Thea, learning of her husband's marriage to a Parthian princess, gave her hand and her assistance to his brother, Antiochus. Tryphon then murdered the child Antiochus VI, but within a few weeks was taken and forced to kill himself. Thus Antiochus VII Sidetes gained the throne. A strong king, he determined that Palestine should be brought under control. His first attempt failed, however, and for three years Judea had some semblance of peace. Then in 135, at a feast in Jerusalem, Simon met his death through the treachery of a son-in-law. Simon's son, John Hyrcanus, kept the assassin from assuming control and was installed in his father's place as high priest.

From Priest State to Kingdom

Antiochus VII, Last Strong Seleucid King - Soon after John Hyrcanus took over, Antiochus VII, invaded Palestine in force, overran the country, and laid siege to Jerusalem. After more than a year Hyrcanus was forced to seek terms. Antiochus accepted tribute and hostages and imposed an indemnity, yet did not further deprive the Jews of their freedom, possibly out of respect for Rome. A little later Antiochus VII, the last strong Seleucid king, was killed (in 129) while campaigning against the Parthians in an effort to re-establish Seleucid rule in the east. Babylonia was thenceforth lost to Parthia, and the Seleucid empire never recovered its former strength.

During this campaign the Parthians freed Demetrius II and sent him back to Syria, hoping to stop the Seleucid advance. Demetrius II, whose reign was interrupted for ten years by his brother's rule while he was a prisoner in Parthia, now resumed control, on Antiochus' death (129). However, he was opposed by his former wife Cleopatra and by an Egyptian-sponsored pretender. After several years of intermittent civil war, Demetrius II was murdered, in 126/25. Later (115–113) Antiochus VIII (Grypus), Cleopatra Thea's son by Demetrius II, and Antiochus IX (Cyzenus), her son by Antiochus VII, fought for supremacy. From then on there was strife between the factions of various successive and rival kings, until Rome took over in 64. This gave the Jewish state its opportunity for growth.

John Hyrcanus Incorporates Samaria and Idumaea - While Rome was standing by, watching the houses of Seleucus and Ptolemy destroy themselves, John Hyrcanus again became an independent prince and expanded his territory in Palestine. He destroyed the city of Samaria and the temple on Mt. Gerizim. An Arab people from Transjordan called Nabataeans, who gained considerable power during the Seleucid decline, had dispossessed the Edomites, many of whom settled in the Negeb, or southern Palestine. John Hyrcanus next moved against these Edomites, now called Idumaeans, and forced them either to leave the country or to be circumcised and become Jews (Josephus Antiquities xiii. 9. 1 [254–258]). Thus the Hasmonaeans, at first champions of freedom against religious persecution, ended by forcing religion on others. This effort to weld together the houses of Esau and Jacob, a plan that had failed in the past, was destined to bring much suffering and sorrow in later years when the Idumaeans ruled over the Jews. See The Hasmonaeans and the Herods.

John Hyrcanus found little opposition from without, but much within his own nation. For some time the Hasidim—the strict party of the “pious”—had become alienated from the increasingly worldly

Hasmonaean priest-rulers. Hyrcanus belonged to the Pharisees, as the principal representatives of the older Hasidim came to be called. But, according to tradition, the Pharisees offended him, with the result that he became a member of the Sadducees (the successors of the older moderate Hellenists) and so conducted himself as to win the antagonism of the populace.

The Hasmonaean Kingdom - On the death of John Hyrcanus (Hyrcanus I) in 105/04, his wife was to succeed him as civil ruler and his son Aristobulus (I) as high priest, says Josephus. But Aristobulus starved his mother to death, imprisoned three of his brethren, and took to himself the joint title of ruler and high priest. His brother Antigonus assisted him in the government until he fell into disfavor and was assassinated. In his one brief year of rule Aristobulus warred against the Ituraeans, a heathen people to the north. Taking Galilee, he forced the inhabitants, like the Idumaeans, to be circumcised and become Jews. At Aristobulus' death (103) Alexandra (Salome), his widow, opened the door of the prison to his brother Alexander Jannaeus. She gave him her hand in marriage, and made him ruler and high priest. Alexander, if not Aristobulus before him, added the title of king. He slew his other captive brother and appeased the Pharisees by giving them important offices in the government. He then planned on the seizure of outlying districts to bring the kingdom of Israel back to about the area it had occupied in the days of David. Alexander's first move, against Ptolemais on the coast, west of Galilee, embroiled the Jews in a struggle between Ptolemy VIII Lathyrus and his mother, Cleopatra III of Egypt. Alexander Jannaeus was defeated, not only at Ptolemais, but at Gaza and other Judean towns. Nevertheless he remained master of occupied territories.

Alexander Jannaeus was greatly detested by the Jews, both in Jerusalem and in the army. Once when he, as high priest, went to the altar to offer sacrifice, the people pelted him with citrons. Enraged at this, he had more than 6,000 slain. Later, a civil war broke out, in which the Jews for a time allied themselves with a Seleucid prince against their own king, who persecuted the Pharisees with barbarity.

Despite his many defeats, Alexander Jannaeus acquired territory east of the Jordan and on the formerly Philistine coast, thus extending the borders of the country to approximately where they had stood in the height of the early Hebrew monarchy.

Decline of the Hasmonaean Power

Finally, in 76/75 Alexander Jannaeus died. His widow, Alexandra (Salome), possibly on his advice, sided with the Pharisees and so established herself as reigning queen. The Pharisees had suffered so much under the cruel rule of Jannaeus that they were willing to have a woman reign if only they could come back into power. Keeping the civil authority in her own hands, Alexandra (see *The Hasmonaeans and the Herods*) entrusted the high priesthood to her son Hyrcanus II. But her son Aristobulus II sided with the Sadducees. Strife between the liberal Sadducees and the conservative Pharisees flared up again. Hyrcanus II permitted a persecution of the Sadducees that drove them to other parts of Palestine and left them determined to raise up a rebellion against him.

On Alexandra's death in 67 the entire authority of the kingdom, both civil and religious, went to Hyrcanus II, but the contest between Hyrcanus and his brother Aristobulus resulted in the intervention of Rome and the end of Hasmonaean rule in 63 B.C. Before the closing chapter of Jewish independence is

concluded, it will be necessary to go back to pick up the thread of Roman history that leads to Pompey's conquest of the East.

Rome to the End of the Republic

In a previous section, the sketch of the development of Rome ended with the year 168 B.C. By that time Rome had put an end to the first of the Hellenistic monarchies and had turned back the Seleucid king Antiochus Epiphanes from the conquest of Egypt, but had annexed no territory. At first Rome used her power in the East in attempts to preserve the peace. In her efforts to avoid unprofitable or unnecessary wars, Rome repeatedly sent commissions to the East to investigate appeals, claims, and counterclaims, and of course to win whatever advantage she could. She sought to build up the smaller states, like Pergamum, which won leadership in Asia Minor through alliance with Rome; when the Seleucid empire threatened to become too powerful she encouraged divisive elements, such as the Jews; she made allies of Egypt against Syria, of the Greeks against Macedonia, and the like. But when Rome became alarmed, she fought ruthlessly. Eventually a series of wars led to territorial expansion that overtaxed her republican constitution and ended in despotism.

The Third Punic War (149-146 B.C.) - By 150 Rome was alarmed by the reviving prosperity of once-prostrate Carthage. Although some Roman leaders had realized that Carthaginian competition was not a threat, there was a party that constantly stirred up the fearful memories of Hannibal, and demanded the complete obliteration of the rival city. Carthage, provoked by adjoining Numidia, an ally of Rome, broke her promise not to wage war without Rome's consent. Rome's vengeance was the Third Punic War. After a three-year siege Carthage was utterly destroyed in 146.

The Fourth Macedonian War (149-148) and Corinth - While besieging Carthage, Rome was met with an uprising in Macedonia, and trouble with the Achaean League of cities in southern Greece. In 146, the year of the destruction of Carthage, Rome annexed Macedonia as a province, broke up the Achaean League, and completely destroyed Corinth, taking off to Italy her art treasures. The administration of Greece was then assigned to the Roman governor of Macedonia.

Rome Acquires Pergamum - In 133 the last king of Pergamum bequeathed to Rome his territory, which embraced a considerable portion of Asia Minor. From then on annexation continued until Rome took over Syria, and finally Egypt, by 30 B.C. But parallel to this growth of empire was an internal revolution that took place in Roman government and society in the century from 133 to 30 B.C.

Rome's Century of Revolution - During the century witnessing the decline of the Ptolemaic and Seleucid houses, Rome not only expanded territorially but also shifted from a republic to a one-man rule. As Rome grew from a city-state 20 miles square to a nation and then an empire, the popular assembly of citizens meeting at Rome to vote became virtually a local machine. The Senate, which had started as an advisory body to the magistrates, gradually became supreme. But it was sadly unfitted to rule an empire. Civic loyalty gave way to grasping for individual aggrandizement.

Contact with other nations had brought tremendous changes. Commerce with, and tribute from, foreign lands had made Rome most wealthy and created new standards of living. Slaves, captured in the wars, soon replaced native farm labor, and as a result unemployment grew. Association with the provincials,

particularly with Greece and the East, had introduced great changes in religion, politics, philosophy, art, and literature. New social vices crept in, bringing increased crime, bribery, and intrigue. The same sort of disintegration that had wrecked the house of Israel in the days of the divided kingdom contributed to the decline and collapse of the Roman Republic and the rise of absolutism.

Attempts at Reform - Italy had been a land of small farms. When the farmers were called to long extended wars their lands were absorbed into large estates devoted to grazing. Tiberius Gracchus, as tribune in 133, attempted to have the state allot public lands to the unemployed. This met such violent opposition on the part of the estate holders that it cost Tiberius his life. In 123 his brother, Gaius Gracchus, became a tribune. He secured the sale of public grain to the poor at half price, and encouraged the landless to settle in the provinces. But his reforms resulted in his death also. Both of the Gracchi tried to have citizenship extended to all in Italy.

A few years later the assembly asserted its power by choosing Gaius Marius, a man of humble origin, as commander against Numidia. Marius' innovation of recruiting paid troops led to the later professional army. He was successful in Numidia and later against two invading Germanic tribes, the Cimbri and Teutones. Marius continued, as consul, to impress upon the army its real superiority over the Senate. Then long-standing discontent occasioned by Rome's reluctance to grant citizenship to all the allied peoples in Italy brought on civil war (the Social War), which finally ended with the extension of citizenship to all Italians.

Political Rule by Military Leaders - The sequel of the war with the Italian allies was a ruthless civil war between a successful general, Sulla, champion of the aristocratic Senatorial party, and Marius, leader of the people's party. Sulla gained political victory and dictatorship through the power of the soldiery. However, he retired after putting through his legislative program strengthening the power of the Senate.

After Sulla's death in 78, one of his own officers, Pompey, distinguished himself both at home and abroad. Elected consul with Crassus for the year 70, Pompey instituted some excellent reforms, but he made clear that any final decision in matters of state lay, not with the Senate or the assembly—as was theoretically the case—but with the leader of the military.

Rome Takes Syria and Palestine - In 67 the popular party made Pompey commander of the forces Rome sent to the East to rid the sea of the Cilician pirates, a task he accomplished in three months. The next year he was authorized to wage war with the recalcitrant kings of Pontus and Armenia. Victorious, he pushed on to the Caspian and subjected Asia Minor to the will of Rome. In 64 Pompey campaigned in Syria, ended the Seleucid monarchy, and turned southward into Palestine. He took Jerusalem and broke the power of the Hasmonaeans. By 63 Syria and Judea were added to the Roman territory.

Caesar and the First Triumvirate - In 60 Pompey, together with Julius Caesar and Crassus, a financial colossus of great influence, formed an unofficial alliance to dominate the Senate. This was known as the First Triumvirate. Caesar, a nephew of Marius by marriage and a partisan of the popular party, had once been deprived of his property by Sulla, and fled from Rome until Sulla's death. In 60, after a year as governor of farther Spain, he was elected consul for 59. The triumvirate worked together to control legislation and to realize their separate ambitions in provincial commands—Caesar in Gaul, Pompey in Spain, and Crassus in Syria and the East. Crassus was killed in his campaign against Parthia in 53. Pompey was elected sole consul for the year 52.

In 49, when Caesar was required by the Senate to leave his legions and stand for consular election as a private citizen, he refused, and crossed the Rubicon River into Italy proper with his troops. Pompey and most of the Senate fled to Greece. At Pharsalus, in Thessaly, Pompey was defeated in 48. Caesar used the constitutional machinery as a tool. For example, he was voted a dictator for life. In fact, the republic was dead, and Caesar was the master of the Roman world. He made some useful reforms, including the introduction of the 365 1/4 day calendar that we use, with only slight correction, today. But he was suspected of wanting to make himself king and was therefore assassinated in 44 B.C.

Octavian the Heir of Caesar - At the death of Julius Caesar it was hoped that Mark Antony, then consul, could reorganize the government along the old lines of democracy. But immediately Octavius, or Octavian (later the Emperor Augustus), then an 18-year-old lad, the grandnephew of Caesar and adopted heir, appeared in Rome to secure his heritage. After a year of wrangling with Antony, a new triumvirate was formed (in 43) consisting of Octavian, Antony, and Lepidus. Following the defeat of Cassius and Brutus, the leading conspirators, both of whom finally committed suicide, Octavian and Antony divided the empire. Octavian took Italy and the West. Antony, taking Egypt, Syria, and the East, forgot his administrative duties in his intoxication with Cleopatra VII, queen of Egypt, who was perhaps more skilled in the arts of intrigue than her great-great aunt Cleopatra Thea of a century before. With Cleopatra, who had charmed Caesar, Antony dreamed of a divine kingship. In 32 Octavian declared war on Antony, and in 31 won a great naval victory off Actium, on the western coast of Greece. Antony and Cleopatra fled to Egypt, leaving their land forces to capitulate. Thereupon Antony's subordinates and the allied and subject princes of the East submitted to Octavian, who went into winter quarters before going on to Egypt in 30. Finally both Antony and Cleopatra ended their lives in suicide. Thus in 30 B.C. Egypt, the last of the great Hellenistic monarchies into which Alexander's domain was divided, became a Roman province.

Octavian Becomes the Emperor Augustus - Octavian, now undisputed master of the Roman world, took care to avoid the title of king, so obnoxious to the Romans. Preserving the external form of republican government, he ruled by holding the offices or the powers of various magistracies simultaneously. The Senate also voted him the title of Augustus ("Majestic"), and he was known as the princeps ("first" or "chief" citizen); his rule was regarded as a "principate" rather than a monarchy (on the attitude of the eastern provinces). Indeed, his successors for a long time preserved this legal fiction of the principate, although historians are right in saying that the republic was dead and that Augustus was the first Roman emperor. He was a monarch in fact if not in name, and the title imperator ("commander" of the armies), which was the source of his imperial power, came in later times to mean "emperor" in a monarchical sense. Augustus was a wise and moderate ruler who brought peace and prosperity to his vast empire. It was during a census decreed by him that the New Testament era was ushered in at Bethlehem.

The End of Hasmonaeon Independence

The Origin of the Herods - The fall of the Jewish priest-kingdom to Rome has been mentioned, but not described. The end of Hasmonaeon rule was linked closely with the rise of the Herod family, of Idumaeon ancestry, that is, of the Edomites who were compelled by the Maccabean John Hyrcanus to accept the Jewish faith (see The Hasmonaeans and the Herods).

This close connection of Edomite and Jew gave to an Edomite named Antipater (or Antipas) opportunity to take a civil post in the Jewish kingdom, and he became governor of Idumaeans for the Jews. His son, also named Antipater, seems later to have held the same position. When civil war broke out between the Maccabean brothers, Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II, the younger Antipater supported Hyrcanus and brought with him the alliance of Aretas III, king of the Nabataeans, an Arabian people of Transjordan and the old Edomite territory. Aretas attacked and defeated Aristobulus, who took refuge in the citadel in Jerusalem.

The Coming of Pompey - It was at this point that the Romans entered the war. Pompey remained in the East after overthrowing the kings of Pontus and Armenia in 66 B.C. In 65 the general whom Pompey sent into Syria was waited upon by emissaries from both Hyrcanus and Aristobulus. Probably for the very practical reason that Aristobulus was safely ensconced in Jerusalem, the Romans sided with him against Hyrcanus. Proceeding south, the Roman army forced Aretas to raise his siege of Jerusalem and withdraw. But the arrogant conduct of Aristobulus caused Pompey to distrust him and to make him a prisoner. The Roman army took possession of the city with the treacherous aid of adherents of Hyrcanus, although Aristobulus' soldiers continued to hold the Temple hill for three months longer. The Romans succeeded in breaking through the walls in the summer or autumn of 63 B.C. In the ensuing capture of the Temple site some 12,000 Jews were slain. Pompey and his officers entered the holy of holies and gazed in astonishment at a sacred shrine that had no visual representation of the God who was worshiped there (see Josephus War i. 7. 6 [152]).

Pompey ended the Maccabean kingdom and took considerable territory away from Judea.

He permitted Hyrcanus to continue as high priest and to rule with the title of ethnarch ("ruler of the people"), probably under the supervision of the Roman governor of Syria. Antipater was made his prime minister. Aristobulus and his sons were sent to Rome as prisoners. They escaped, however, and three separate times rose up in revolt against the Romans. Each time they were disastrously defeated. In exasperation, Gabinius, the Roman proconsul of Syria, divided Judea into five districts, each governed by a council of elders. Under this arrangement Hyrcanus retained less and less administrative responsibility, while Antipater took more and more authority, becoming virtually the ruler.

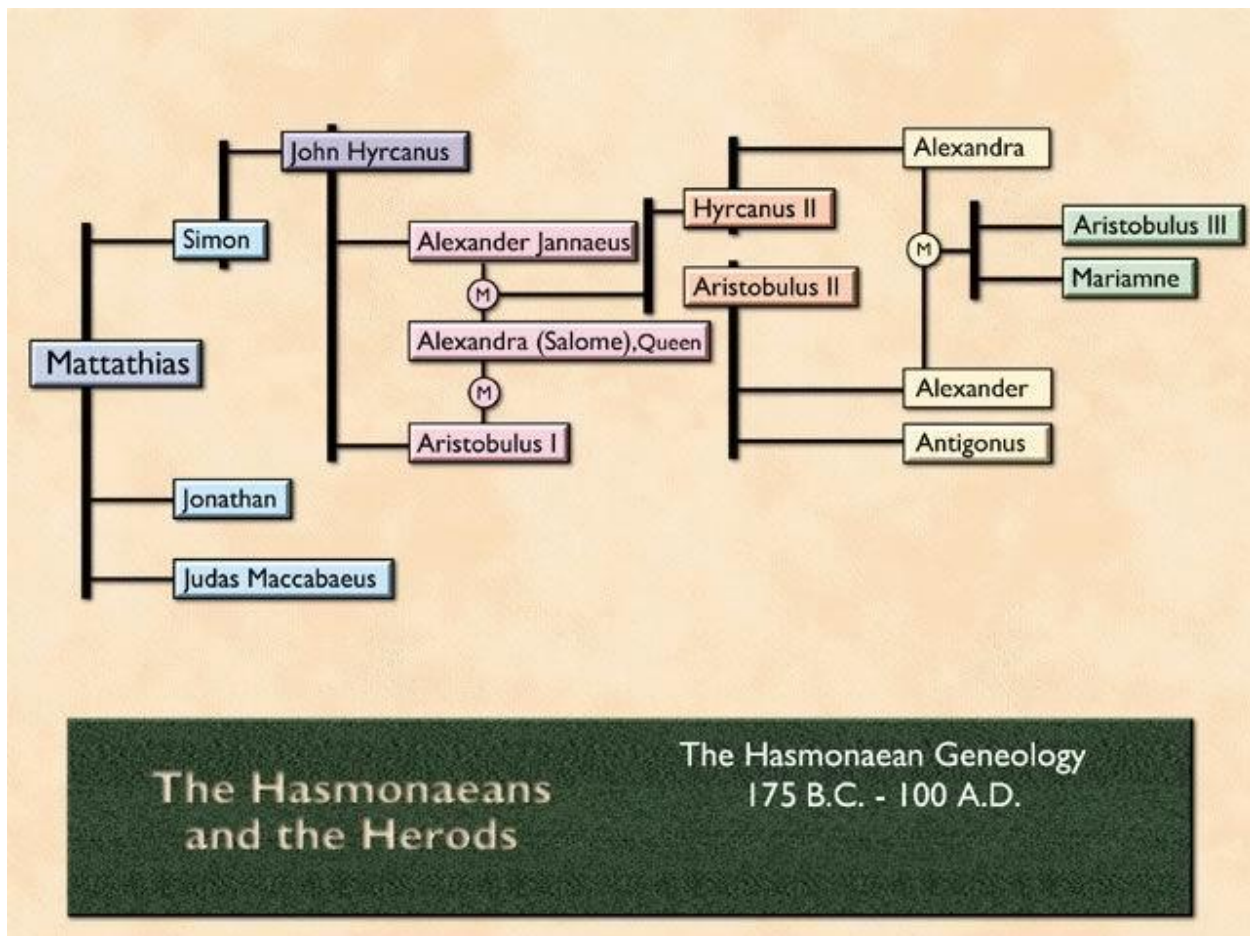
In 54 B.C. Crassus, the triumvir, the successor of Gabinius as proconsul of Syria, on the pretext of requiring money for a Parthian campaign, plundered the Temple treasure, with the result that the Jews revolted in 53. In 48, when Pompey was slain in Egypt, after his defeat by Julius Caesar at the Battle of Pharsalus, Antipater changed sides and became a vigorous and efficient partisan of Julius Caesar. In return, Caesar granted favors to the Jews. Hyrcanus was accorded full authority, in 47, with the titles of ethnarch and high priest, which titles were made hereditary to the Jews. Nevertheless, Antipater was still the man actually in power, and made this clear to the Jews, to the great disgust of the nobility. Antipater appointed his son Phasael governor of Jerusalem and its environs, and a younger son, Herod, later Herod the Great, governor of Galilee.

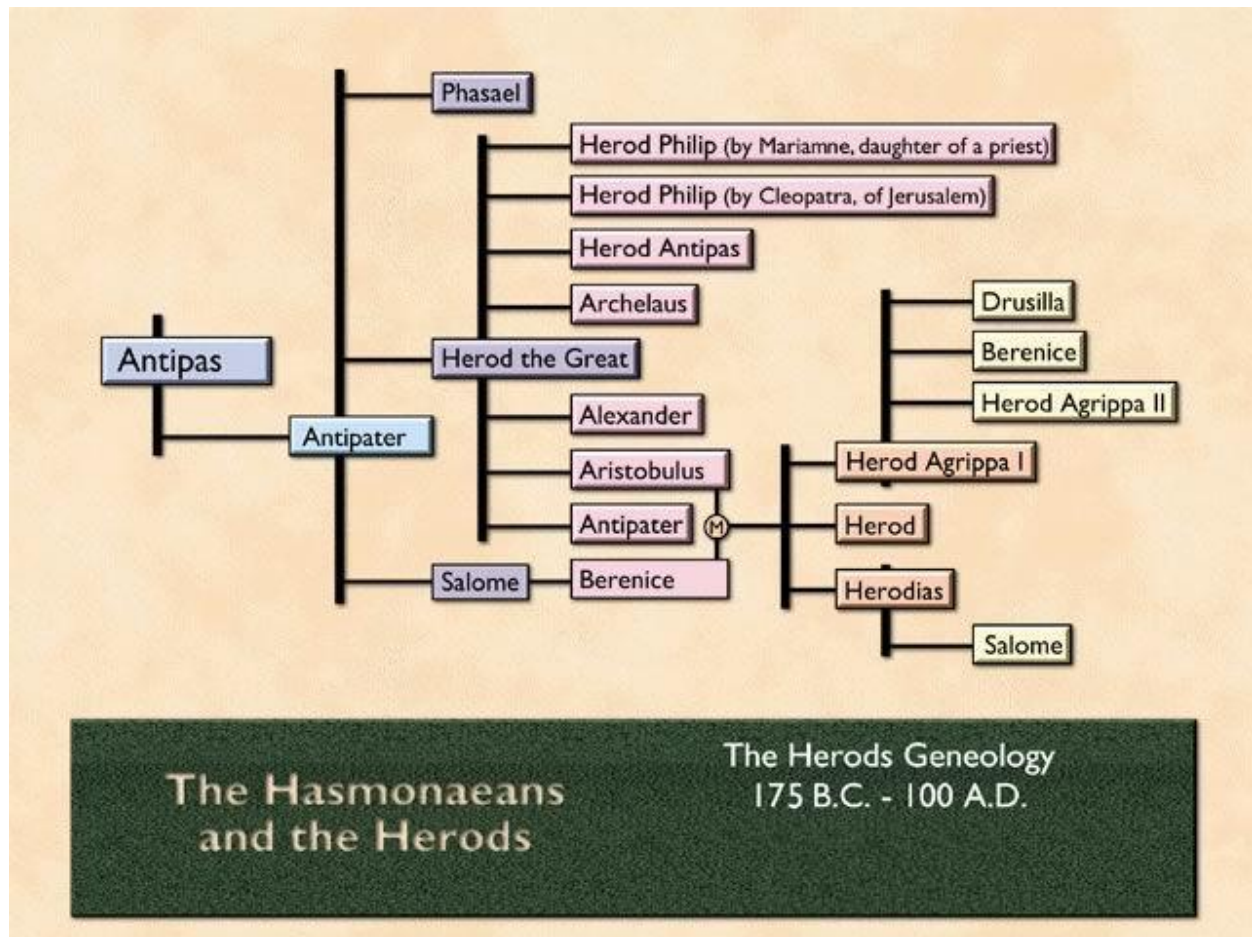
After Julius Caesar was assassinated in 44, Cassius, one of the conspirators against Caesar, secured the Roman command in the East, and to him Antipater and Herod gave wholehearted support. In return, Cassius made Herod governor of Coele-Syria. Shortly thereafter Antipater was poisoned in Jerusalem.

In 42 B.C., after the defeat of Brutus and Cassius, Antony assumed control of Roman interests in the East. Having been previously a friend of Antipater, Antony refused the pleas of the Jews to remove the Herodian house and retained Herod and his brother as ethnarchs of Palestine. Hyrcanus was allowed to remain, but only as a high priest. Herod strengthened his position with the Jews by betrothing himself to Mariamne, a granddaughter of Hyrcanus II (see The Hasmonaeans and the Herods).

Herod as King - The next year the Parthians invaded Syria, and Antigonus, a son of Aristobulus, raised the banner of revolt and gained the help of a force of Parthians. Phasaël was made prisoner and eventually killed himself, while Herod fled and finally reached Rome. There, Herod won the favor of Antony and Octavian, who were at that time in alliance, and the Roman Senate, in 40 B.C., unanimously voted Herod the kingship of Judea.

Although Herod had the help of Roman arms, it took him three years to gain possession of his throne. The Jews who opposed him made their last stand in Jerusalem. It required almost three months to take the upper city and the Temple site. The subsequent slaughter was frightful, for both the Romans and the Jews of Herod's party were enraged at the stubborn resistance offered them. Antigonus, the last Maccabean to function as king, was scourged ignominiously, and, at Herod's earnest plea, put to death. Herod was now (37 B.C.) "master of a city in ruins and king of a nation that hated him."





The Reign of Herod the Great

From the point of view of politics and culture Herod was rightly called “great.” He succeeded in maintaining a balance of allegiance in the shifting current of a difficult political stream; on the one hand he strengthened his kingdom and protected its prosperity, while on the other he retained the friendship and cooperation of Caesar Augustus. But along with his sounder qualities he was possessed of a growing jealousy and suspiciousness of nature that caused him to murder his closest relatives and best friends.

Herod and the Sanhedrin - Almost immediately upon gaining the throne, Herod executed 45 nobles who had led in the revolt of Antigonus. Many of these men were members of the Sanhedrin, and their loss necessitated its reorganization. The new council thus organized was dominated by the Pharisees. However, many of these Pharisees were opposed to Herod and had even refused to take an oath of allegiance to him; consequently he did not allow them to exert a significant influence on politics. Accordingly, the Sanhedrin became chiefly a place for theological discussion.

Herod and the Hasmonaean - Herod insulted the remnant of the Hasmonaean (Maccabean) family by appointing as obscure Babylonian (or Egyptian) Jew as high priest. Because Herod suspected the

Hasmonaeans of plotting against him, he eventually put to death old Hyrcanus II; his daughter Alexandra, Herod's mother-in-law; Hyrcanus' grandson, Herod's own brother-in-law, the well-favored Aristobulus III; and finally Mariamne, Aristobulus' sister and Herod's own wife. Except for his sons by Mariamne, this marked the end of the Hasmonaean house, which for almost 150 years had been foremost in Jewish affairs.

Hellenization - Like Alexander the Great, Herod's patron, Augustus, was determined to unify the Roman world through the diffusion of Greek culture. Herod was quick to follow his example, and attempted to do for Palestine what Augustus was doing on a larger scale for the empire. A tide of heathenism swept over Jerusalem. Greek races and games were the order of the day, the religion and trappings of paganism flourished within sight of the Temple, and shrines to pagan gods were erected at various places throughout the country. When in reaction some of the Pharisees plotted against Herod, he retaliated vigorously and destroyed many of them.

Herod the Builder - At strategic places throughout his dominions Herod built fortresses to keep the turbulent Jews in check; in fact, his own beautiful palace in Jerusalem was virtually a fortification. He spent years and thousands of talents in building the city of Caesarea and in providing for it an artificial but effective harbor. His building activities also took him outside Palestine. He presented market places, gymnasiums, and temples to communities as far away as Greece, Rhodes, and Syria.

Herod's greatest project was the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem. The Temple of Zerubbabel, beautiful though it had been, was now almost 500 years old and badly in need of repair. Herod determined to satisfy his own artistic pride, and at the same time to win the friendship of the Jews, by giving them a magnificent place of worship. Eighteen months were devoted to rebuilding the sanctuary proper, and eight years were spent on the surrounding platforms, walls, courts, and porches. After the work had been brought to this point, and the buildings were in full use, much still remained to be done; in fact, the details of the Temple were not completed until after A.D. 62, only a few years before it was destroyed by the Romans.

Herod's Last Days - Aristobulus and Alexander, Herod's sons by his Hasmonaean wife Mariamne, had been educated at Rome, and were tall, handsome men, proud of their Hasmonaean blood. When they returned to Jerusalem they became the objects of plots by Herod's sister Salome (See NOTE) and his son Antipater. As a result the suspicion of Herod was aroused against these two sons, and he finally brought about their execution in 7 B.C. At the same time some three hundred Jews accused of sympathizing with them were stoned to death. Antipater continued to scheme, until, only five days before his own death, Herod ordered this son executed also.

NOTE: This Salome (no relation to the Hasmonaean Alexandra, mother of Hyrcanus II), was the grandmother of Herodias, and thus the great-grandmother of the Salome whose dancing won her the head of John the Baptist from Herod Antipas, a son of Herod the Great and the ruler of Galilee before whom Jesus was tried.

As Herod approached the end of his life he could pride himself on many substantial achievements. He was leaving monuments of great artistic beauty; commerce and manufacturing in Palestine were in sound condition. But Herod was not loved by his people; they hated him for his heavy taxation, his paganizing activities, and his unbounded cruelties. When he fell ill and it was declared that he could not recover, wild rejoicing broke out in Jerusalem, and a mob tore down the golden eagle—hated emblem of their Roman

overlords—that Herod had placed over the entrance to the Temple. When he did recover, however, Herod wreaked his vengeance upon many of these disappointed celebrants.

Sensing that his last days were upon him, the old king ordered his sister Salome to imprison in the hippodrome all the leaders of the Jews and to kill them as soon as he himself was dead, in order that the nation might be in mourning when his time came. Although she did carry out the order of imprisonment, Salome later released the men.

One of the last acts of Herod the Great was the malicious killing of the infants of Bethlehem in the vain endeavor to destroy the Messiah, the newborn Jesus, of whom he had heard from the wise men of the East (Matthew 2:1-18). Joseph and Mary escaped with the infant to Egypt, where they remained until Herod died early in 4 B.C.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

THE MESSIAH'S GENEALOGY

Priest Zacharias Turned Mute by God in 4152 A.M.

To safeguard the plan of salvation, God worked miraculously in the life of Zacharias, John the Baptist's father. One day when the old Levite priest Zacharias "executed the priest's office" (Luke 1:8), burning incense in the temple's Holy Place, "there appeared an angel of the Lord on the right side of the altar of incense" (Luke 1:10). The angel delivered a message that was intended for Zacharias and his wife only. They should keep it to themselves; that is why the angel appeared to the priest inside the Holy Place, while the rest of the worshippers waited outside (Luke 1:10). The crowd outside was unaware of what was happening inside the temple; they even marvelled that Zacharias tarried inside for so long (Luke 1:21). But Zacharias received one of the mysteries of the Kingdom to protect God's prophecy regarding the coming of the Messiah. This message should be kept undisclosed until due time.

The people in the outer court were eager to know what happened inside and enquired of the priest, but he could not speak. He just made signs that they could not comprehend except that they perceived that Zacharias had seen a vision (Luke 1:22). The angel who brought the message had told the priest that he was going to remain mute and not be able to speak until the day that these things shall be performed (Luke 1:20); that is until the child John the Baptist should be born; and not in Jerusalem but in the country hills of Judea (Luke 1:65).

It was imperative that the old priest become mute for nine months because he did not believe the words of the angel (Luke 1:20). An unbeliever who receives the word of God is prone to question its truthfulness and voice his incredulity. But more than that, if Zacharias had not believed wholeheartedly what the angel had revealed to him, he could have tried to understand the message from the mouth of his colleagues. Then the message that should remain concealed until the time of fulfillment would have been disclosed even among the enemies of God. In that regard the old priest's muteness served as a protective shield against the craftiness of Satan, and a safety net for the coming of the Messiah.

John the Baptist: a Nazarite from Birth

God's enemies, particularly Satan, should not discern beforehand who the Messiah was. Therefore, God preordained the birth of John the Baptist who was born with the vow of a Nazarite. The angel's message to the Levite priest was straightforward: that Elisabeth his wife was going to conceive a son and call his name John (Luke 1:13). Moreover, the angel stated that this child was going to make reforms in the lives of many of the children of Israel, that by his ministry many would be converted from their sins to the Lord their God (Luke 1:16). The angel also told Zacharias that their son would go before the Lord in the spirit and power of Eliah (Luke 1:17). John should be a Nazarite from his mother's womb. For that reason, the angel had counseled him:

“For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb” Luke 1:15.

A Nazarite was a person who was separated for a holy mission-separated for the Lord (Numbers 6:2). A Nazarite was commanded to abstain from wine, strong drink, vinegar, liquor of grapes, nor to eat moist or dried grapes (Numbers 6:3); that is, no product from the grapevine (Numbers 6:4). Nazarites were also commanded to let their hair grow and not to make any trims or cuts; that is, no razor should be used on their heads (Numbers 6:5).

An example of a Nazarite is that of Samuel. The Word of God reveals that the last judge of Israel was born with the vow of a Nazarite from his mother's womb. Samuel was promised to God by his mother Hannah that if God would grant her to conceive “a man child, then I will give him unto the LORD all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head” (1 Sam. 1:11). Samuel was granted the high honour to carry on with the holy office of a Nazarite, a priest and a prophet. We will see that John the Baptist also fulfilled those three characteristics. But first let us consider the following Messianic prophecy that, while speaking directly of Samuel, also represents the life of John the Baptist who proclaimed the good news of the Messiah and of the Kingdom of Heaven. The Scripture reads:

“And I will raise me up a faithful priest that shall do according to that which is in mine heart and in my mind: and I will build him a sure house; and he shall walk before mine anointed for ever” (1 Sam. 2:35).

Samuel was a faithful priest who prepared the way for King Saul, who was God's anointed. Notice that the life of John the Baptist also fits the description of (1 Sam. 2:35). John also prepared the way of the Lord, and walked before the Messiah, the anointed of the Lord.

The Savior's Conception in 4152 A.M. (4 B.C.)

The time had come for the fulfillment of the prophecies regarding the birth of the Messiah. And Divine providence directed the life of Mary to act very prudently in order to safeguard the life of her Savior.

While in the hill country of Judea John the Baptist was growing in the womb of Elizabeth, “in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth” (Luke 1:26). It was in the sixth month of the year 4152 that Gabriel visited Nazareth and announced to Mary the conception of the Messiah who was to be called “the Son of the Highest,” and to whom the Lord God was about to give the throne of his father David (Luke 1:32). The virgin understood that this King Whom she was about to conceive would sit on David's throne. But the angel revealed more than that; this King was not only the son of David but he shall be called the Son of God (Luke 1:35), therefore “of His kingdom there shall be no end” (Luke 1:33). On the same visit, Gabriel revealed to Mary that her cousin Elisabeth was also expecting a baby in her old age, and had already been pregnant for six months. (Luke 1:36).

When the virgin had agreed to God's holy proposal the angel departed from her (Luke 1:38), and after Mary had a conversation with her husband Joseph, she arose “and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Judah” (Luke 1:39). When she entered the house of her cousin Elisabeth and greeted her, the baby in Elisabeth's womb leaped, and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:41). The reason is that Mary had already conceived Jesus Who was the Creator of the universe, Who incarnated in the

likeness of man to save us. Elisabeth saluted her cousin Mary with the honourary inquiry as to why it was granted her the honour of this visit, she asked: “that the mother of my Lord should come to me?” (Luke 1:43). Mary also acknowledged that it was her Saviour and God who was in her womb: “My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour” (Luke 1:46, 47).

Three Months Away from Home

After Joseph and Mary had celebrated their wedding ceremony, they did not spend time together like in an intimate honeymoon; instead the young virgin went on her way to the hills of Judaea, where she spent her first three months of pregnancy at the house of her cousin Elisabeth (Luke 1:56). And it seems that she returned to her own home after Elisabeth gave birth to John the Baptist (Luke 1:57).

Mary’s three months away from Joseph helped future generations of believers to understand that this holy couple did not have marital intercourse to bring about the birth of our Saviour. The Scriptures reveal that “before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost” (Matt. 1:18). Although the plan had to be carried out speedily, it should also be conducted correctly in order to fulfill all righteousness; that is, it had to be done under the right circumstances of the virgin and her husband’s marriage. Thus the Holy Child was conceived by the Holy Spirit right after the wedding of Joseph and Mary. Therefore, the baby’s conception was legitimate because Mary was the legitimate espouse of Joseph (Matt. 1:18). By accepting God’s plan, Mary demonstrated her loyalty to God as she preferred to honor God rather than men. As soon as she had entered into a covenant with God, the newly-wedded virgin had to advise her husband that she was carrying in her womb the Creator and Redeemer of the world. When Mary told Joseph about her amazing experience they both kept the matter highly confidential. God’s mystery remained undisclosed to the rest of humanity until the victory had been won by our Lord Jesus.

Birth of John the Baptist in 4152 A.M.

John the Baptist’s birth happened in the ninth month of the year 4152 (4 B.C.) exactly six months before our Lord Jesus’ birth. It was in the month called Kislev which is the equivalent to November/December of our calendar. The Lord Jesus was conceived in the sixth month (Luke 1:26) of 4152 when Elizabeth was in the sixth month of her pregnancy (Luke 1:36). If the birth of a Biblical dignitary should be celebrated on the 25th of December that would have to be the celebration of John the Baptist’s birth and not that of our Savior Jesus. Actually, neither of their birthdays were recorded nor celebrated as such.

On the day of John’s birth, Zacharias prophesied, and although the wording of his speech sounded like it referred to his newborn son John, it was an utterance in reference to the Messiah who was soon to be born. The events around the Baptist’s birth, also helped to confound and thwart the cunning stratagem of Satan. The miraculous way that Zacharias became mute helped protect the plan of salvation against Satan’s diabolical plans. On the day of John’s circumcision something amazing happened. The child’s name was revealed for the first time to the public. The close relatives who witnessed the child’s circumcision decided that the baby should be called after his father; so they called him Zacharias (Luke 1:59). But Elisabeth immediately silenced them with a loud and clear “Not so; but he shall be called John” (Luke 1:60). The mother did not reveal any God-given information as to why the name John was chosen, even

though the neighbors and relatives questioned her decision saying that nobody in their family had been called by this name (Luke 1:61).

Seeing that the cousins and friends could not persuade Elisabeth to change her mind regarding the name John, they proceeded to ask Zacharias (Luke 1:62). Zacharias who was still mute requested them by signs to bring him a writing table where he simply wrote the following “His name is John” (Luke 1:63). And all the people marveled.

But they had seen nothing yet! Immediately Zacharias’ mouth was opened as he spoke for the first time in nine months and began praising God (Luke 1:64). News of this amazing event spread throughout the hill country of Judaea (Luke 1:65). Moreover, the people wondered in their hearts saying: “what manner of child shall this be?” (Luke 1:66).

Zacharias began to prophesy without revealing anything else but what the Holy Spirit put in his heart (Luke 1:67): “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David” (Luke 1: 68-69).

God who does not lie was presenting a message that was unfathomable for the fallen angels’ minds, so that Satan could not decipher its meaning. What might have been through the mind of the fallen angels when they heard Zacharias prophecy? Was it possible that this child John was the Messiah Who had come to redeem God’s people? Moreover, John’s father continued prophesying, only this time his reference was about John, “the prophet of the Highest,” as he addressed his newborn baby: “for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways” (Luke 1:76). Zechariah prophesied that John’s mission was “to give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins” (Luke 1:77). But Zechariah he did not reveal that the Redeemer had been incarnated in human flesh in the womb of a virgin.

Dreams: One of God’s Means of Communication

Another way in which God protected His plan of redemption for this world and the ministry of our Lord Jesus was through the many dreams by which he directed his children at the time of our Lord’s incarnation. Joseph was told of Mary’s miraculous conception through a dream (Matt. 1:20), and he was also warned in a dream to flee with his family to Egypt (Matt. 2:13). The wise men were warned in a dream not to return to Herod (Matt. 2:12). Therefore, the communication through dreams was one of God’s tactics in the spiritual war to safeguard the plan of salvation. Consequently, the person who received a dream from God was able to know what was in God’s mind, while Satan and his followers were unaware of God’s moves. Before we continue let us discover what the Word of God has to say about Heaven’s communication through dreams.

When communicating His thoughts to human minds God sometimes appears in a dream to interconnect His thoughts with the thoughts of men. That is how God has spoken to many people in the past, for instance when He wanted to warn king Abimelech about Abraham’s wife God came to Abimelech in a dream by night and said to him that he was a dead man for having taken the wife of another man (Genesis 20:3). Another example of God communicating His will through a dream is that of King Solomon’s petition: “the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and God said, Ask what I shall give thee” (1

Kings 3:5). Notice that Solomon petitioned the Lord for wisdom, and their dialogue was done through a dream while Solomon slept.

God alone has the power to know the thoughts in the minds of His created beings. No one else of God's creatures has that capacity. King David counseled his son Solomon to know God and walk with a perfect heart "for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts..." (1 Chronicles 28:9).

Because only God has the power to know what a particular being in the universe is thinking, dreams, which are closely associated with the thoughts of the mind, cannot by any means be discovered by a third person other than God.

Satan Could not Discern God's Plans

Satan and his kingdom of wickedness can never foresee what is in the heart of the Lord. They are just catchers of opportunities as they cannot understand nor actually anticipate God's operations; they can deploy their wicked forces against God's people but will never be able to know what is in the thoughts of God and His children. The prophet Micah, speaking about the nations that war against Sion, expressed something that helps us understand this: "But they know not the thoughts of the LORD, neither understand they his counsel for he shall gather them as the sheaves into the floor" (Micah 4:12). Therefore, God's enemies cannot intercept the thoughts of the Lord. It is shocking to know Satan has used methods of close examination and even torture so that through intimidation he can wring the truth out of the children of God.

There are ways in which the wicked spirit world can know what is in the mind of people; that is, if people allow Satan access to their minds by partaking in the wicked lifestyle of the kingdom of darkness. Or even when good people harbor foreign thoughts that are not the product of their own thinking and by impulse give voice to such thoughts. A vivid example is that of Peter, who, for a moment, tried to dissuade the Lord Jesus from dying for us on the cross (Matt. 16:21). The Lord rebuked him harshly and said to him "Get thee behind me Satan, thou art an offense unto me" (Matt. 16:23).

Joseph Urged to Remain Married to Mary in 4152 A.M.

Having made it clear how God protects His plan of salvation by communicating his secret through dreams, let us see what happened in the year 4152 when God made this world His dwelling place.

Joseph had recently married Mary, but when he learned about his wife's pregnancy, he decided to divorce her in a very private way (Matt. 1:19). It was then that the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream (Matt. 1:20). The angel spoke directly to Joseph, but no one else was able to hear the conversation because it was carried out from the angel's mind directly to Joseph's mind. The enemies of God were unaware of the message that Joseph had received. To Joseph the angel expounded the prophecies concerning the birth of this special baby in the virgin's womb (Matt. 1:20). What is most amazing is that Joseph was the first person to whom God revealed that the name of the Lord will be Jesus. Joseph received the honour of naming the child (Matt. 1:21). Remember that no one else should know the name of the

Lord until the day of the baby's circumcision. That is why it was necessary that the message be given through a dream, because in that way not even Satan could discover the details of the birth and the name of our Saviour. The new adopted name of the Lord was a top secret because the prophecies forenamed Him as Emmanuel, but here Joseph was told that he shall call Him Jesus. The angel of the Lord quoted Isaiah 7:14 to Joseph: "they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us" (Matt. 1:23).

Birth of Jesus the Messiah in the Year 4153 A.M. (3 B.C.)

The Lord Jesus was born six months after his cousin John, his birth took place in the third month of the year 4153 (3 B.C.). The third month is called Sivan in the Jewish calendar and it is the equivalent to May/June in our calendar. When Mary "brought forth her firstborn son" (Luke 2:7), the Scriptures say that "there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over the flock by night" (Luke 2:8). This data also confirms that the birth of our Savior took place at a time when it was fair weather, appropriate for them to care for the sheep in the fields at night.

Those humble shepherds were eager to see the fulfillment of the Messiah's prophecy as written in Daniel's book, and were expecting that at any moment the good news should be received. And God, Who honours those who honour Him, visited them, and with great joy the lowly shepherds received God's message:

"For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11).

Notice that the good tidings are about the birth of a newborn baby who is the Savior Whose title also is THE LORD. With that address God the Father glorifies and exalts God the Son. The Father also addressed the Son with the divine and majestic proclamation: "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever..." (Psalms 45:6). The apostle Paul confirms the fact that the divine declaration in Psalms was a praise from the Father to the Son, where, indeed, God is exalting God. Therefore, the epistle harmonizes: "But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of thy kingdom" (Hebrews 1:8).

The Word of God reveals that our Lord Jesus is the true God; hence, worthy to be worshipped. Therefore we must praise and exalt Him saying: "To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and for ever. Amen" (Jude 1:25). That newborn baby, Who was and is the Lord, is He of whom His apostles wrote:

"And we know that the Son of God is come and hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life" (1 John 5:20).

Wise Men's Guidance Through a Dream

The wise men who traveled from off the eastern borders of Israel had received God's top secret. They had begun to taste the abundant grace of God as revealed in "the mystery, which from the beginning of the

world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 3:9). Because of their faithfulness and diligence in searching the prophecies regarding the birth of the Saviour they had been highly blessed with God’s revelation of His mysteries.

But the wise men made a grievous mistake, they visited the dragon’s den by inquiring of King Herod regarding the whereabouts of the newborn King. Such inquiry only provoked Herod to be instantly concerned (Matt. 2:3). With this visit the opportunist dragon, also called the old serpent, devil and Satan (Revelation 12:9), thought that the life of our Saviour was in his hands, for he had been waiting the birth of that Child and planning to destroy Him as soon as He was born (Revelation 12:4). Satan had some knowledge of the prophecies and used that knowledge to plot the assassination of the Child through the civil authority of the Roman official Herod. However, he wanted to ensure that the recently-born John was not the promised Messiah. Therefore, he prompted Herod to investigate from the chief priests about the Messiah’s prophesied place of birth, which they asserted to be Bethlehem of Judea (Matt. 2:5). Herod had no clue about what was going on in the great cosmic conflict and Satan did not have all the particulars about the Saviour’s family background nor the specific home where our Lord should be born. He could only find out through a leaking of information from these wise men. Therefore, he tried as subtly as he could to make inquiries from them about the specific details of God’s revelation and regarding the time when they had begun to see God’s signs.

Scripture reveals that Herod took aside the wise men in private and inquired of them diligently as to when the star appeared (Matt. 2:7). This was a very delicate inquiry, and Satan fetched all the particulars possible, but he was infuriated and desperate for a thorough identification of the Child. When their interview was over, Herod sent them away to Bethlehem, and because he had showed them kindness, he requested of them to return his favor by asking them to return to him with a report after they “search diligently for the young child” (Matt. 2:8). He was not interested in a mediocre report; he wanted a full investigation so that he could plot an assassin’s visit which he cunningly labeled as “worship”.

From Jerusalem the wise men traveled further south to a small city called Bethlehem of Judea. God had to act promptly; Satan had plotted the destruction of our Saviour. Once again, because Satan cannot read the minds nor can he search a person’s dream, God warned the wise men in a dream that they should not return to Herod, so they traveled via another road back to their own country (Matt. 2:12). Satan’s scheme was frustrated, as the devil could not destroy the Lord Jesus’ life through Satan’s right arm the Roman Empire. But the wise men had made a big mistake; because of the leakage of information that Satan had fetched from them, dozens of infants would be massacred.

A Dream to Flee into Egypt

Remember that Joseph and Mary had come from a long distance from their home in Galilee in the North of Israel to Bethlehem because the Roman Empire had given strict orders to conduct a census for all the people of Israel. So the couple had to travel to their homeland where they had their ancestral lineage and there they took the census in Judea, the region of the tribe of Judah, for them both belonged to Judah.

It is amazing how God kept the secret about the family background of the Lord Jesus. Satan could never figure out that a humble family traveling south from Nazareth was going to be temporarily lodging in Bethlehem to fulfill the prophecy. To get to Bethlehem they had to pass beyond Jerusalem because

Bethlehem was located further south in the territory of Judah. Joseph and Mary were just lodging there to register their names in the national census.

Satan could not attack the young family because he did not know the family from whom the Messiah was to be born. He did not know the secrets given to God's people by dreams. Therefore, right after the wise men had departed and when the young family of the Lord had gone to sleep, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream (Matt. 2:13) with the following urgent message:

"Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him" Matt. 2:13.

Notice once again that God spoke to Joseph in a dream so that Satan could not find out about their moves. Bear in mind that Satan could have tried to destroy Mary, had he known that she was the virgin carrying the Lord of Heaven. Joseph was awoken in the middle of the night and it was through another dream with the urgent message to take the young child and his mother and flee that very night because Satan was intending to destroy the life of the young Child. I can imagine that Joseph gently awoke Mary his wife and told her that they had to leave that very hour. Mary knew that the Child's life was in danger and they could not venture into speaking verbally what they had received in a dream. They fled walking steadily and quietly throughout the night and went south to Egypt where they should wait for further instructions from the Lord (Matt. 2:14). They remained in Egypt until the death of Herod (Matt. 2:15).

It seems that Satan himself was kept at a distance from the place where the Lord Jesus was born. Satan was expecting the return of the wise men to Jerusalem, and when they did not show up bringing news to Herod, his schemes failed. Herod was exceedingly furious and began plotting a massacre that extended from Bethlehem down the regional cities of the coasts (Matt. 2:16). He sent to kill "all the children from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men" (Matt. 2:16). Here is where the mistake of the wise men comes to light, they had leaked precious information that they had received God's guidance for the past two years; that is why Satan through Herod sent and killed all the children from birth up to two years of age (review Matt. 2:7).

Ramat Rahel is a town situated south of Jerusalem, just before the locality of Bethlehem. Ramat is the historical place of which Jeremiah had prophesied concerning the sad day of the slaughtering of little children, of which it is said "In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not" (Matt. 2:17-18). The writing of Jeremiah renders the name of the town as Ramah and the mourning mother whose children were slaughtered as Rahel, from there the new name of the modern city "Ramat Rahel" (Jeremiah 31:15).

This massive infanticide carried out by Satan's right arm, the Roman Empire, and in particular through King Herod, Rome's puppet ruler in Palestine, shows that Satan was furiously blinded. He ordered his Roman soldiers to carry out the slaughter of the children in a vast radius in the southern region of Israel, expecting that by this systematic killing they could kill the Child Jesus Whom they thought could not be too far away. But, God in His wisdom had previously commanded Joseph to flee with his family out of Israel into the territory of Egypt.

The Lord Jesus' Genealogy

Divine providence also protected the plan of salvation in the life of our Savior Jesus by means of the two lineages in Jesus' genealogy. Let us see how God protected the plan of salvation in the genealogy of our Lord Jesus.

Genealogy of Jesus in Matthew 1:1-16					
1	Abraham	15	Solomon	29	Salathiel
2	Isaac	16	Rehoboam	30	Zorobabel
3	Jacob	17	Abia	31	Abiud
4	Judah	18	Asa	32	Eliakim
5	Phares	19	Josaphat	33	Azor
6	Esrom	20	Joram	34	Sadoc
7	Aram	21	Ozias	35	Achim
8	Aminadab	22	Joatham	36	Eliud
9	Nahshon	23	Achaz	37	Eleazar
10	Salmon	24	Ezekias	38	Matthan
11	Boaz	25	Manasses	39	Jacob
12	Obed	26	Amon	40	Joseph
13	Jesse	27	Josias	41	Jesus
14	David	28	Jechonias		

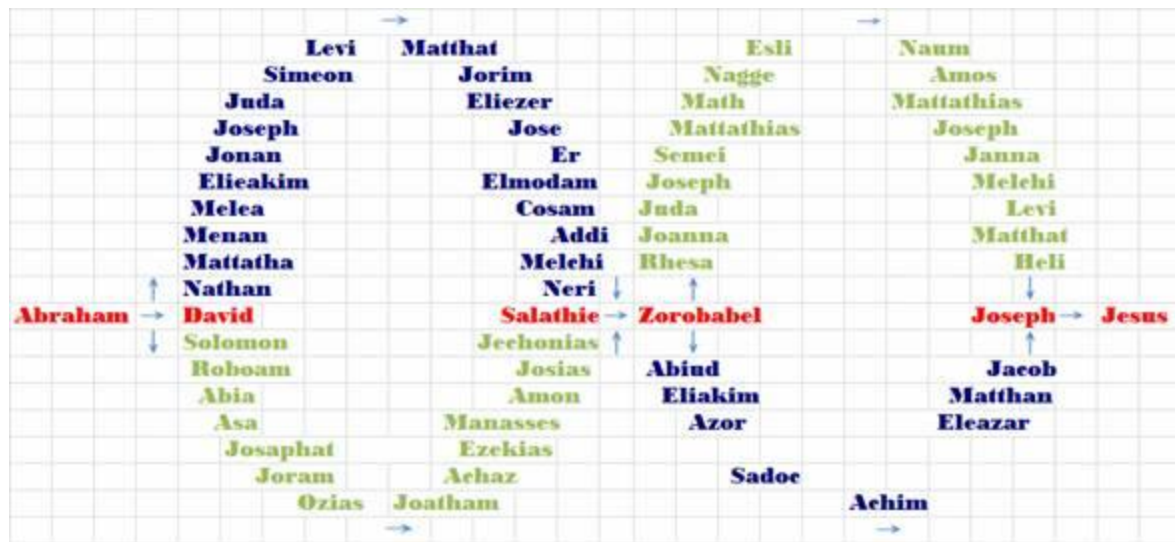
The greatest of all the mysteries of God is found in the genealogy of our Lord Jesus. Jesus Christ the Creator (John 1:1-3), Who from everlasting to everlasting is God (Psalms 90:2), He “was made flesh” (John 1:14). And, we find His lineage from the scepter of David. Of the Lord Jesus it is said in the Psalms: “Thy throne O God, is for ever and ever; the scepter of thy kingdom is a right scepter” (Psalms 45:6; Hebrews 1:8). Of Him Jacob promised “The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet...” (Genesis 49:10). Referring to Him, Nathan the prophet told King David “... thy throne shall be established forever” (2 Sam. 7:16). Consequently, the prophecies were fulfilled on that glorious day when our Lord Jesus entered Jerusalem and the multitudes acclaimed Him with the shouts: “Hosanna to the son of David; Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest”

(Matt. 21:9). To Him belongs the Kingdom of Heaven, which he said “is at hand” (Matt. 10:7). Of this Kingdom, the Lord Jesus said: “My kingdom is not of this world...” (John 18:36).

Genealogy of Jesus in Luke 3:23-38							
1. Adam	11. Shem	21. Abraham	31. Boaz	41. Joseph	51. Cosam	61. Semei	71. Melchi
2. Seth	12. Arphaxad	22. Isaac	32. Obed	42. Juda	52. Addi	62. Mattathias	72. Levi
3. Enos	13. Cainan	23. Jacob	33. Jesse	43. Simeon	53. Melchi	63. Math	73. Matthat
4. Cainan	14. Sala	24. Juda	34. David	44. Levi	54. Neri	64. Nagge	74. Heli
5. Mahalaleel	15. Heber	25. Phares	35. Nathan	45. Matthat	55. Salathiel	65. Esli	75. Joseph
6. Jared	16. Phalec	26. Esrom	36. Mattatha	46. Jorim	56. Zorobabel	66. Naum	76. Jesus
7. Enoch	17. Ragau	27. Aram	37. Menan	47. Eliezer	57. Rhesa	67. Amos	
8. Methuselah	18. Saruch	28. Aminadab	38. Melea	48. Jose	58. Joanna	68. Mattathias	
9. Lamech	19. Nachor	29. Nahshon	39. Eliakim	49. Er	59. Juda	69. Joseph	
10. Noah	20. Thara	30. Salmon	40. Jonan	50. Elmodam	60. Joseph	70. Janna	

The ancestry of the King of kings dates back to the generation of Adam (Luke 3: 23-38). But is it possible that the Lord has a human genealogy if He is the Creator of all humanity? Of Him it is written: “Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually” (Hebrews 7:3); “...and who shall declare his generation? For he was cut off out of the land of the living...” (Isaiah 53:8).

Jesus' Genealogy: DNA Helix Pattern



Jesus' lineage was framed lineally from Adam, reaching onto Abraham and it follows a lineal genealogy until King David. But notice that this lineage is parted in two separate genealogies on two occasions: after David, and after Zorobabel. Consequently, in the eyes of the reader, both Luke and Matt. have two apparently discrepant lineages. Matt. wrote that Jesus descended from King David through the kingship of Solomon, (Bathsheba and David's son) (2 Sam. 12:24). Whereas Luke wrote that Jesus descended through the lineage of Nathan. This Nathan was also David's son, the second child of Bathsheba, (1Chronicles 3:5). Now, which one is the correct genealogy?

In answering that question, notice that Jesus' lineage was inherited from David through both Solomon and Nathan and down the centuries both genealogies linked together again with a common descendant, as both lineages have Salathiel. This Salathiel fathered Zorobabel, the offspring of the two combined lineages. But from Zorobabel the genealogies parted in different ways, as Zorobabel is said to have begotten Abiud in the Gospel of Matt (Matt. 1:13), whereas in the Gospel of Luke, Zorobabel fathered Rhesa (Luke 3:27). So here we have a repetition of God's mystery; Zorobabel fathered two sons: Abiud and Rhesa, just like David fathered Solomon and Nathan. And in both instances the two pairs of sons had their lineal genealogy split to part separate ways. Zorobabel's two sons Abiud and Rhesa, once again split their recently combined lineage. Therefore, David's lineage was carried in two parallel helices until those two royal lineages combined once again with the life of the Lord Jesus.

It is not surprising to hear that David had two sons, and that of course David's lineage was parted running parallel like two DNA helices combining at different intervals. What is intriguing is the fact that Salathiel had two fathers: Neri and Jechonias. Also Joseph, the husband of Mary, appears with two fathers: Jacob and Heli. Now the question is: Is it possible that two of those four men are the fathers in law of Salathiel and Joseph respectively?

Either Heli was the biological father of Joseph or Jacob was his father in law - or vice versa. But one of the two was the biological father of Mary. In the book of Matt. we find that the genealogy of Jesus from Abraham to Jesus is subdivided in three genealogies of fourteen generations each. Thus it reads: "So all

the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations” (Matt. 1:17). But then, of course, if you count the last fourteen generations from the captivity in Babylon there appear only thirteen names of men, the second last name for those generations is the name of Mary of whom the Lord was born.

Joseph was from the tribe of Judah and from the very lineage of David through Nathan (Luke 3:23, 31, 32), and even though his lineage had parted ways, it had also intertwined like a DNA molecule about a common axis, Zorobabel. Therefore, Joseph’s blood remained in the gene pool of David’s royal blood. Yet, Mary’s lineage came directly from David’s royal blood through the lineage of King Solomon. Consequently, Mary was favored by God because she belonged to David’s family but also because she was a righteous woman (Luke 1:30). Moreover, the angel told her: “And behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus” (Luke 1:31). He is the Son of the promise, of the Scepter of David (2 Sam. 7:16). Of Him the angel told Mary: “He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of his father David” (Luke 1:33). Moreover, the angel proclaimed: “... of his kingdom there shall be no end” (Luke 1:34). That is because His kingdom has been from eternity. The Lord’s Kingdom did not begin here on earth; for the Kingdom of Heaven came down to earth. That is why “Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am” (John 8:58). He was sent as One who has lived for eternity. Jesus is before Abraham, and His Lordship and Kingship are way before David’s earthly kingship. The Scriptures reveal this in Jesus’ address to the Pharisees:

“While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, Saying, What think ye of Christ? Whose son is he? They say unto him, the son of David. He saith unto them, how then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then calls him Lord, how is he his son? And no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions” (Matt. 22: 41-46).

When Elisabeth addresses Mary with the words: “And whence is this to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?” (Luke 1:43), the focus of attention is not Mary but the everlasting Lord who was incarnate in Mary’s womb. That is also why Elisabeth calls Him, who was still in the womb, “my Lord”.

The Inheritance of the Son of God

The title “The Son of God” belongs to the Lord Jesus only. Of Him, the angel said: “...Therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:35). Because He is the Son of God, the Lord Jesus allowed people to worship Him. One occasion when He walked on the water, Peter, by Jesus’ power had been allowed to do the same. When Peter’s faith failed because of the boisterous wind (Matt. 14:30) the Lord rescued him and the wind ceased (Matt. 14:32). “Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, of a truth thou art the Son of God” (Matt. 14:33).

One day the Lord Jesus healed a man who had been blind from birth (John 9:1). When the Lord found him later, He asked him: “Dost thou believe on the Son of God?” (John 9:35). After hearing from the Lord Jesus Himself that He is the Son of God, as Jesus told the man: “Thou hast both seen him, and it is

he that talketh with thee” (John 9: 37), the former blind man said: “Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him” (John 9:38).

Bearing on Himself the Kingly title: “The Son of God”, the Lord Jesus also received the servant title “The Son of Man”, because He “made himself of no reputation... and was made in the likeness of men” (Philippians 2:7). That is why He said about Himself: “For the Son of Man is come to save that which was lost” (Matt. 18:11). Only God has the prerogative of forgiving sins, but when the Lord cleanses people of their sins He presents Himself under His servant title: “But that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins...” Three Gospels record this event (Matt. 9:6; Mark 2:10; Luke 5:24), each is speaking of the Lord’s seventh day. Thrice it is written that the Lord uses His servant title in connection with His Lordship as a reminder that He is the Creator. Thus we have Jesus’ acknowledgment of His Divinity: “For the Son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath day” (Matt. 12:8; See also Mark 2:28 and Luke 6:5 and Genesis 2:2).

Regarding the theme of Jesus’ genealogy, let us consider that Mary was a means that God used for the inheritance of God to be incarnated in the person of Jesus Christ. Mary’s lineage descended from Kings David and Solomon (Matt. 1:1-16), therefore, the Lord Jesus rightfully received His title “the Son of Man”. The Lord was born of a virgin according to Isaiah’s prophecy (Isaiah 7:14, Matt. 1:23). But Joseph played a vital role in safeguarding the promised inheritance. The inheritance of the Messiah remained in the tribe of Judah and more importantly in the family of David. Therefore, when Joseph decided to remain married to Mary, he legally raised up the name of the Heir upon His inheritance. The Heir is the Lord Jesus Who is rightfully the Son of God and the Son of Man.

To explain the mystery of Jesus’ genealogy and the role of Mary and Joseph in relation to God’s promised inheritance, let us firstly consider the law that God gave to Moses in regards to the inheritance of Zelophehad’s daughters (Numbers 36:3). Because Zelophehad had only daughters, the men were concerned about the tribe’s inheritance, so they argued: “if they be married to any of the sons of the other tribes of the children of Israel, then shall their inheritance be taken from the inheritance of our fathers, and shall be put to the inheritance of the tribe whereunto they are received...” (Numbers 36:3). Therefore, God commanded regarding women heirs: “...Let them marry to whom they think best; only to the family of the tribe of their father shall they marry” (Numbers 36:6).

Second, let us consider the command that God gave Israel in order for them “to perform the duty of a husband’s brother” in the case of a brother’s death leaving his wife a widow without children. As a way of maintaining the perpetuity of his brother’s name, he had to marry his sister in law (Deuteronomy 25:5). Notice what the Lord said: “And it shall be, that the firstborn which she beareth shall succeed in the name of his brother which is dead, that his name be not put out of Israel” (Deuteronomy 25:6). Keep in mind that it is the first born who inherits his dead uncle’s name.

And third, let us consider the law of inheritance and marriage by the next of kin. We have the story of Ruth the Moabitess who married Mahlon, Naomi’s son, of the tribe of Judah from Bethlehem. After ten years of marriage Ruth’s husband died (Ruth 1:1-7). Ruth, who had no children, became a widow at a young age, and she decided followed her mother in law Naomi as they traveled to claim their inheritance in Bethlehem (Ruth 1:22). As the Bethlehemite Boaz entered into a marital agreement with Ruth, they had to settle a matter of inheritance. By law the next of kin was to raise the name of the dead upon the first born son (Deuteronomy 25:6). Boaz perpetuated the name of the dead, that is, Mahlon’s name, by

marrying his widow Ruth (Ruth 4:5-6). Therefore Boaz said: “Moreover Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be my wife, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance, that the name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren...” (Ruth 4:10).

Putting this in perspective, Boaz, who belongs in the lineage of Jesus, was the great-grandfather of King David. By marrying Ruth, Boaz also perpetuated the name of the dead Mahlon so that Mahlon’s inheritance should remain in Judah’s tribe, but more importantly that Mahlon’s name should be perpetuated among their own family. This union produced the birth of their firstborn son Obed who was the grandfather of King David.

When it comes to the birth of the Lord Jesus we find that the story of Boaz is an object lesson, a portrayal of the mystery of the Lord Jesus’ birth and genealogy.

When Joseph who belonged to the tribe of Judah and who was of the family of David, married Mary, also from David’s blood royal, he fulfilled all righteousness in that he perpetuated the name of King David by legitimately accepting Mary as his wife of whom was born the One who assumed the scepter of David, the Lord Jesus, Mary’s firstborn son (Matt. 1:25). Joseph did not sire the Lord Jesus. He was conceived in Mary’s womb by the power of the Holy Spirit. This is one of two reasons why He is called the only begotten Son of God (John 3:16). Yet, Joseph, on behalf of God, perpetuated David’s name upon Jesus’ inheritance. Of Whom it is also written: “Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they” (Hebrews 1:4).

Think for a moment about Zelophehad’s daughters; they were the recipients of their father’s inheritance, which should remain within their tribe, and in particular in their families. Therefore they only married husbands of their own family (Numbers 36:6). This story is also a portrayal of what should happen in the life of Mary who was favored of God to bear in her womb the Heir of God’s inheritance, His everlasting throne. Therefore, Mary should marry a husband of her own family lineage in order to fulfill the prophecy that Christ the King should come from the seed of David of the tribe of Judah. But Jesus’ name is more glorious than David’s royal lineage, as the Scripture says:

“Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and thing under the earth” (Philippians 2:9-10).

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

JOHN THE BAPTIST'S MISSION

“But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.” 1 Corinthians 2: 7-8.

Two Cousin Priests

Our Saviour's life and plan of salvation was not only safeguarded by the way God communicated his secret through dreams and the genealogy of Jesus, but also by the upbringing of one of the greatest prophets the world has ever seen, John the Baptist. Was John the Baptist born to the priesthood? Yes he was; his father was a Levite priest who had been officiating in the Holy Place of the temple when he received the angel's announcement that he was to become the father of one of the greatest men. But of John the Baptist nothing had been written concerning his priesthood in the house of the Lord, yet he was to be anointed priest at the age of thirty years because he was the son of a priest. John was filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb and willingly ministered as a priest calling the people to repentance.

How appropriate it was that to safeguard the plan of redemption, John the Baptist was born and grew up in the south of Israel, in the hill country of Judea. Bear in mind that Bethlehem the prophetic town where the Messiah should be born was situated in the province of Judea. Now, to protect the life of the Saviour and the plan of salvation, God in His providence had directed Joseph, before he met Mary, to move from the land of his inheritance, from Judah's tribal land, to Galilee in the north of Israel where he met Mary who also belonged to the tribe of Judah. So they had settled down in the town of Nazareth in Galilee, where the Lord Jesus' conception took place. But the Messiah was born in Bethlehem in Judea and remained there for just a couple of days before Joseph fled with his family to Egypt. They eventually returned to Galilee where they settled down in Nazareth.

It was impossible for Satan to figure out who of the two holy men was the Messiah. One was growing up in the right place in Judea and the other one was growing up in the wrong place, the place of which Nathanael said “can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? (John 1:46) One was to become a priest following his Levite lineage, the other one was a humble carpenter living in the wrong place, but of Whom it was written that He was a “priest of the most high God (Hebrews 7:1), he is a Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec (Hebrews 5:6).

As a priest John the Baptist prepared the way of the Lord Jesus. John served the purpose of safeguarding the ministry of Jesus. He grew up in the south, he had the vow of a nazarite from birth, and he was a righteous man who lived in the desert. But in the north was growing up Emmanuel, the Lord Jesus who is called Christ (Matt. 1:16). He was a man of humble beginnings, a most righteous Man Who earned His living working in His home carpentry shop but more importantly the only One Who never sinned (Hebrews 4:15).

Jesus' Priestly Ministry Begins in 4183 A.M. at Age 30

John the Baptist, was a Nazarite, a priest and a prophet, one who matched many of the characteristics of the Messiah. He began his public ministry at age 30 around the time when the Lord Jesus also began His public ministry in 4183. The Word of God gives ample evidence that John the Baptist began his ministry at the age of thirty years; just like the rest of his brethren the Levite priests.

Luke the evangelist gives an insight about the fact that John the Baptist was called to the ministry when he was thirty years of age; just like our Lord Jesus. The Gospel links the exact year of Jesus' beginning of his public ministry with the year when John the Baptist received God's call to prepare the way for the Lord. First, he wrote that it was in the 15th year of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was Governor of Judaea (Luke 3:1). Then he stated that Annas and Caiaphas were High Priests when "the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness" (Luke 3:2). Once again Luke makes reference to the prophecy of Isaiah; which was fulfilled in that very year. He wrote:

"As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight" (Luke 3:4).

Matthew states that "in those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea" (Matt. 3:1); here the evangelist is making reference to the time when the Lord Jesus also began his public ministry as Messiah and Priest. After writing that John had just begun his ministry, Matt. presents the fact that the Lord also began his ministry on the day of His baptism (Matt. 3:13). Of Him it is written that He was anointed by the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:38). Notice that the Lord comes from the north, from Galilee Galilee where nobody would imagine that the King from David's lineage would descend. Remember that the tribe of David was in the south in Judah, where David established his kingdom.

John the Baptist played a vital role as prophet and priest because through him not only was the secret hid from the enemies of God, but he was also instrumental in the anointing of the Messiah by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, "In those days" the prophecy of Isaiah was fulfilled in the life and ministry of John the Baptist, as Matt. says: "For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias" (Matt.3:3). The evangelist quotes all the words of the prophecy:

"The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God" (Isaiah 40:3).

Bear in mind that God purposely omitted the name of John the Baptist from Isaiah's prophecy. He would rather prophesy of him as the voice of one crying in the wilderness. God could have given the name of such a mighty man of valor, but He intended his name to be undisclosed. Isaiah prophesied of King Cyrus and called him by his full name even when that king had not yet been formed in his mother's womb. Likewise, God could have revealed a complete family background about the Baptist, but instead He chose to prefigure him as an anonymous preacher. Revealing his name God would have taken away one of many safety nets arranged to maintain in low profile the early life of our Saviour.

John the Baptist had preached in a very short period of time to most of the country of Israel. He traversed through the Jordan River valley as he preached the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins (Luke 3:3). He had declared to all Israel that his baptism was with water; but that one mightier than him was coming Who shall baptize them with the Holy Spirit (Luke 3:16). And one day, when John had finished

baptizing, Jesus was also baptized (Luke 3:21) and the heavens were opened and the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus while a mighty voice came from heaven saying: “Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased” (Luke 3:22). All these things happened in the days when John received the commission to preach and baptize for the remission of sins, when “Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age” (Luke 3:23). The phrase above has just mentioned that the Lord began His ministry when he was about thirty years of age. Therefore, in the year 4183 two 30 year old priests met each other in the Jordan River, one after the order of Melchisedec, the Lord Jesus, and the other after the order of Levi, John the Baptist.

Behold the Lamb of God

The secret about the Lord Jesus was so well kept that not even John the Baptist knew Him. Even though John’s mother Elisabeth and the Lord’s mother Mary were cousins, they had not seen each other ever since the visit of Mary thirty years earlier. So they were not acquainted with each other except that the Holy Spirit had instructed John about the Lord. The Baptist says “I knew him not” (John 1:31). Then the Baptist reveals a very important information about the Lord, he declared that the reason why he was sent to baptize was for the purpose that the Lord Jesus “should be made manifest to Israel” (John 1:31). Therefore here for the first time the God of Heaven was going to reveal Jesus, the lowly carpenter coming from Galilee as the Son of God, and therefore the Lord was going to be made manifest as Christ the Messiah.

A few days before meeting the Lord Jesus, John had told his followers that one is coming and is “mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear” (Matt. 3:11). And on the day when the Lord was baptized, John guided by the Holy Spirit, called his followers’ attention to the Majesty of Heaven and proclaimed: “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). With such grand acknowledgement John realized that his own salvation depended on the life of Jesus. But John did not address the Lord by his name because he did not know him (John 1:33). However, John was also commanded to make Him manifest in the eyes of the Israelites; therefore, he was given a sign for identifying the Lord (John 1: 26). Thus the Holy Spirit had beforehand informed him that: “Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost” (John 1:33).

Nobody else but John saw the Spirit descending from heaven and resting on the Lord Jesus (John 1:32). It was an identifying sign intended only for John to see. Later the Baptist remarked “and I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God” (John 1:33).

How amazingly the plan of salvation had been kept secret from the enemies of God! How important it was that John and the Lord remain unacquainted during those thirty years; because in that way Satan could not possibly identify the Messiah before due time. Bear in mind that sometimes circumstances compel people to speak. For instance: the incident when Peter was rebuked by the Lord with the phrase: “get thee behind me Satan” Jesus felt compelled to say this because the devil had put those words in Peter’s mouth. Similarly, Satan might have been questioning John the Baptist through his human instrumentalities as to whether he was the Christ. Therefore, the Baptist revealed an important piece of

information when he said: “Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him” (John 3:28).

John the Baptist was not in the habit of calling the Lord by His name, but by his mission title. Thus, the day after Jesus’ baptism, while John was standing with two of his disciples and looking at Jesus passing by, the Baptist said: “Behold the Lamb of God!” (John 1:36). When John’s two disciples heard him speak of the Lord, they decided to follow Jesus (John 1:37). Andrew was one of them who left John to become one of Jesus’ disciples (John 1:37).

On the day that the Lord was baptized, not only the people of Israel were eyewitnesses to the glorious manifestation of God’s mystery, but the whole universe witnessed God’s proclamation of Jesus the Saviour of the world, the Son of God. “The heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him” (Matt. 3:16). There, the Lord Jesus was manifested in the hearing of all present as the Christ. Remember that there was an audible voice, a voice that was heard from heaven which said: “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matt. 3:17). There and then for the first time Satan realized that the Lord, the Majesty of Heaven was also the humble Galilean man whose physical appearance was nothing extraordinary. Of Him the prophet Isaiah had written: “he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him” (Isaiah 53:2). Had the enemy known that the lowly Nazarene carpenter boy growing up in the grace of God was the Saviour of the world, he would have focused all his rage on Him and the Lord Jesus would have been a fugitive all His life.

All Eyes Focused on our Lord Jesus

The devil could not believe it when the Lord Jesus was the focus of attention at the Jordan river and God said: “This is My beloved Son”. Satan realized just then that all his perspicacious observations of the events taking place were of no avail to him, because he had been kept in the dark regarding God’s plan of salvation. Satan had been defeated by God’s wisdom all those years. But the devil wanted to verify it himself whether Jesus was indeed the Saviour of the world, the Son of God. Therefore, on the occasion when the Lord was led by the Spirit into the desert, after He fasted and prayed forty days and forty nights (Matt. 4:1-2), Satan assailed Jesus with the same question and asked twice: “If thou be the Son of God”. With that question the devil wanted to achieve many things: he wanted to make sure whether Jesus was indeed the Son of God. Satan also tempted the Lord to prove his Divinity by commanding the stones to become bread. But the Lord’s answer was: “It is written; Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4).

Satan was astonished that Jesus gave all credit to the Word of God, consequently the tempter immediately changed his strategy and began quoting Scripture, but not without first trying to irritate the Lord by a repetition of the same question “If thou be the Son of God”. If Satan could cause the Lord to be irritated, he could also incite Him to demonstrate self pride, either by showing off His faith or His power. Therefore, very subtly the devil said: “cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone” (Matt. 4: 6). Once again the Lord calmly replied “It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God” (Matt. 4: 7). With such an impressive reply, the Scriptures reveal that the Lord Jesus had

already perceived Satan behind all these temptations. But Satan had not understood that Jesus had recognized him from the very beginning, from the moment when Satan opened his mouth. Therefore in His second reply, Jesus made it clear that He was not acceding to the devil's temptations. Nonetheless, Satan was more determined to try to get the Lord angered by offering Him, Who is the Creator and Owner of everything, all the kingdoms of the world, which Satan claimed as his possession. Satan insulted the Lord by saying: "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me" (Matt. 4:9).

To Satan's daring proposal the Lord Jesus replied: "Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve" (Matt. 4:10). Only God can be worshiped, not an angel (Revelation 19:10), not a man, notice what happened in the book of Acts "as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him. But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man" (Act 10:26).

Only to God belongs the prerogative to be worshipped: "Exalt ye the LORD our God, and worship at his footstool; for he is holy" (Psalms 99:5). The Almighty God has for eternity been worshipped by His creatures, and He commands all the heavenly beings to reverence and worship God the Son. Therefore, "when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him" (Hebrews 1:6).

Satan had disguised himself as a heavenly angel. However, our Lord Jesus did not focus his attention on the messenger's physical appearance. On the contrary, He paid close attention to the message. The Lord Jesus tested the spirit's message by the written Word of God, and the same counsel is given to God's church: "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:8).

Thus, the Creator of all animate and inanimate things in the universe, was confronted by one of His creatures, a renegade and malevolent fallen cherub who approached the Lord with the murderous intent to cause Jesus' downfall. It was none other than the archenemy of God, Satan himself, who used to be called Lucifer "son of the morning" (Isaiah 14:12), who tempted our Lord Jesus.

When Satan approached the Lord Jesus, he did not appear as the mighty covering cherub that he once was, but as a common angel. Satan took the form of an unknown angel that Jesus could not recognize as one of those He had created. Remember that the entire angelical hosts were created by Jesus:

"For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him" (Colossians 1:16).

Our Lord Jesus, who had created all the angelical hosts and had given them their personal names, could certainly have recognized any of his loyal angels coming to visit him when he had been in prayer all those days. Nonetheless, He was confronted by a disguised stranger who dared to open his mouth to tempt the Lord. The Lord who opens our understanding that "the Word of God is not bound" (2 Timothy 2:9), Himself was not going to be bound to Satan's whim. Our Saviour knew that there must be compatibility between the Word of God and God's messengers: they must speak in accordance with Scripture; that is, "to the law and to the testimony" (Isaiah 8:20), for Scripture counsels us to test the spirits whether they are from God (1 John 4:1). God counsels His children to follow Jesus' example; that is, to "Submit

yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” (James 4:7). He was our example in submission to God and resistance against Satan, for the devil fled from him.

Satan presented himself in disguise, in the form of an angel and not in the form of a powerful cherub as he once was. “And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.” (2 Corinthians 11:14). Satan retains the capacity to transform himself into the external and physical appearance that he may choose. He may opt to approach humanity even in the similitude of the universal Christ that humanity has come to accept as “the authentic” portrayal of our Lord Jesus.

Satan could not try to deceive the Lord Jesus by approaching Him in the form of one person of the Godhead, because as the Holy Scriptures reveal of our Lord Jesus: “And we know that the Son of God is come... Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life” (1 John 5:20). Our Lord Jesus is the true God! And the Word of God reveals: “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him” (John 1:18). Because the Lord Jesus is God and He alone has seen the Father, then the tempter would not dare tempt Jesus by impersonating the Godhead. Satan can only deceive humanity by impersonating divine beings because no human being has ever seen God the Father. He can only deceive those who pay little or no attention to the written Word of God and His commandments. People should know that there is not a single authorization in the Word of God for the apostolic church to have a portrait of our Lord Jesus. Satan knows that he can only deceive those who expect the coming of the Jesus he has painted in the minds of people.

Time and again it is clear that foreign forces are at work trying to distort and rewrite the Holy Scriptures in the minds of people who ignorantly prevaricate as they fall into the trap of make-believe they are doing Jesus a favor. They want to give our Lord Jesus a decent portrayal of people’s own conception of what He should look like. And the worst thing is that in trying to help Jesus they downgrade Him from His glorious and magnificent figure to a level of a mere human being. No wonder God strongly warned His people not to make any similitude of God so that they should not corrupt themselves:

“Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves; for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the LORD spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire: Lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female” (Deuteronomy 4:15-16).

The Baptist: “I must Decrease that He may Increase”

As the Lord became very popular because of His earnest desire to save His people from their sins, John the Baptist commented to his disciples: “This is he of whom I said, after me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me” (John 1:30). By this statement, the Baptist was conferring all honour to our Creator. John was also baptizing in Aenon near Salim, for he was not yet been put in prison (John 3:22-23). One day, John’s disciples’ asked him: “Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizes, and all men come to him” (John 3:26). To that comment the Baptist replied: “A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven. Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:27, 28, 30). John the Baptist had solemnly proclaimed:

“And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God” (John 1:34).

Execution of John the Baptist in 4183 A.M.

Not willing to accept defeat, Satan poured all his rage upon John the Baptist. While the Lord was in the desert fasting for forty days and forty nights, John the Baptist was preaching and baptizing in the Jordan River. But when our Saviour returned victorious He also began preaching and baptizing. The Scriptures reveal that when the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, he departed to Galilee (John 4:1-3). When the Lord departed from Judea to Galilee, He heard that John had been put in prison (Matt. 4:12). John's imprisonment happened in the year 4183, just a little time after Jesus returned from praying in the desert.

Satan was opposed to John the Baptist, not only because he came preaching repentance of sins, but because through his life the Lord Jesus' plan of salvation had been protected. Herodias had for a long time wanted to kill the Baptist because he had reproved her sin of committing adultery with her brother in law Herod (John 6:18, 19). Therefore, Satan was looking for the opportunity to destroy John but did not do so until "a convenient day was come" (John 6:21). Satan sought the opportunity to kill John after he learned that through the Baptist, God's plan of redemption had been kept secret. It was not politically right for him to carry out his murderous plan beforehand. But the day came when in 4183 Satan's murderous scheme was carried out as Herodias and her daughter asked for John the Baptist's head in a charger for a birthday present (John 6:25).

Jesus Preaches of Judgment Day in 4187 A.M.: "As the Days of Noah"

In the year 4187 when the Lord Jesus had visited Jerusalem before His death on the cross, He preached about God's final judgment. In His preaching he brought to memory the events that took place in the year 1656 when God destroyed the earth with a worldwide flood. The Lord Jesus warned that "as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (Matt. 24:37). In His prophetic words the Lord revealed to His disciples that the condition of the world will be morally degraded but also that the people of the world will be living upon earth as if everything is okay, showing an attitude of carelessness for the Kingdom of Heaven and living unaware that judgment had been going on for a long time, just like the days of Noah who had been warning his contemporaries for a period of 120 years before the flood. Therefore, the Lord Jesus continued:

"For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (Matt. 24:38-39).

Jesus Preaches About the End of the World

There are those who deny the events that took place in sacred history as recorded in the first chapters of Genesis But the Lord Jesus when He preached while sitting down on the Mount of Olives near Jerusalem brought to His disciples' attention the events that will take place prior to His second coming.

The Lord Jesus made reference to the strange dawning of that day when in the year 2045 Jehovah destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah with brimstone and fire from the Lord (Genesis 19:24). The Lord said: “Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all” (Luke 17:28-29).

The Messiah: A Blessing for All Nations

Counting from the beginning, 4187 years had elapsed in the chronology of this world since the day when the Lord had pledged His life as a propitiation for the fallen human race (Revelation 13:8). The Messiah had finally come and was “despised and rejected of men” (Isaiah 53:3), He was smitten of God (Isaiah 53:4), “He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities” (Isaiah 53:5), “and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53:6), he was “brought as a lamb to the slaughter yet he opened not his mouth” (Isaiah 57:7).

The long expected Messiah was none other than the Creator of this world Who had offered Himself as a sacrifice on the day that Adam and Eve brought upon themselves the curse of death by transgressing God’s holy Law. All the patriarchs from Adam to Abraham, as well as the Jews, had been sacrificing unspotted and unblemished lambs for a period of 4187 years. These sacrifices represented the Messiah Who had finally offered Himself and laid down His life for us in 4187 as He hung on the cross. And Isaiah’s prophecy was fulfilled that prophesied about the Messiah who was crucified and martyred in Jerusalem:

“I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people...” (Isaiah 65:2).

Yet He offered Himself for the remission of our sins: “Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the Holy Place, having obtained eternal redemption for us” (Hebrews 9:12). On the cross the Lord Jesus redeemed the entire human race. He exclaimed “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit” (Luke 23:46), as He died; and the prophecy of Genesis 3:15 was fulfilled that the old serpent who poisoned Adam and Eve should bruise the Messiah’s heel. But our Creator triumphed over sin and Satan, and as the Lord resurrected, the second part of the Genesis’ prophecy was gloriously fulfilled, so that by the Messiah’s victory that old serpent’s head was symbolically utterly crushed as the devil was judged (John 12:31); and soon the sentence will be executed about him: “and never shalt thou be any more” (Ezekiel 28:19).

God’s Children of the Promise

Since the days of Adam God’s people on earth had been waiting for the fulfillment of the promise-the Savior of the world. Such a promise was not new to Abraham; to him God said: “for in Isaac shall thy seed be called” (Genesis 21:12). So there is no point in other religions disputing the promise, because the Savior did not come from the seed of Ishmael, or any other, but from Abraham through his son Isaac. Remember that Ishmael was cast out from Abraham by the directions of God (Genesis 21:9-13).

Salvation comes from Yahweh God Almighty and it is offered to Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and to all the races of the world. Yet, the Savior would come from God's chosen children of Abraham; that is, "...Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise" (Hebrews 11:9). So the Savior comes from the people of Israel as it is written: "But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend" (Isaiah 41:8).

If Abraham built an altar with one of his children it had to be with Isaac, and it was on Mount Moriah, the place where God tried Abraham's faith to see if he would offer his son Isaac in a burnt offering (Genesis 22:2). It was on that site that "...Solomon began to build the house of the LORD at Jerusalem in mount Moriah, where the Lord appeared unto David his father..." (2 Chronicles 3:1). There is no other city of the thousands in the whole earth that God calls holy apart from "Jerusalem the holy city" (Nehemiah 11:1). It is of Jerusalem that the prophet said: "...the outcasts in the land of Egypt, shall worship the LORD in the holy mount at Jerusalem" (Isaiah 27:13). If ever Ishmael, an outcast in Egypt, wished to worship God in a holy city, that would have to be in Jerusalem, of which the prophet wrote: "O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city" (Isaiah 52:1).

Explaining how the promise was received, the apostle wrote: "Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called" (Romans 9:7). The truth is that the Seed was not coming from the loins of Ishmael whose children are also descendants of Abraham. "That is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed" (Rom 9:8). "For this is the word of promise, at this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son" (Romans 9:9).

Whether you are a Jew, or a Muslim, or Hindu, or Buddhist or a Christian; if you accept God's offer of salvation through His Son Jesus, then God's promise is yours: "Thou whom I have taken from the ends of the earth... Thou art my servant; I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away" (Isaiah 41:9). Therefore, you are also invited to belong to the children of the promise. You and I are called to belong to the true God and Savior Jesus, as it is written: "Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise (Galatians 4:28). That is the reason why God said to Abraham: "And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed..." (Genesis 22:18, Acts 3:25), because God's blessing is the salvation for this world. Therefore, it is also written: "Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you in turning away every one of you from his iniquities (Acts 3:26). And speaking of David, God says: "Of this man's seed hath God according to his promise raised unto Israel a Savior, Jesus" (Acts 13:23).

CHAPTER NINETEEN

FULFILMENT OF DANIEL'S PROPHECY

"But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law" Galatians 4:4.

2300 Years Until Judgment

The Word of God's most glorious prophecy is that concerning God's everlasting plan of salvation in the life of our Lord Jesus. The climax of this prophecy is detailed by chronological and prophetic wisdom in the book of Daniel. The Prophet Daniel presents in detail how to count the years in order to reach the chronological year for the anointing of Jesus the Messiah, also the year of the Lord's sacrifice, and the period of time determined for the Jewish nation when the Gospel went to the Gentiles.

End of 70 Years Jerusalem Desolation Landmark for 2300 Year Prophecy

We have seen in chapter seven that Cyrus' decree was the landmark for counting and understanding the longest time prophecy of Daniel 8:14. The Chronicles of the kings of Israel assert the fact that the Persian King Cyrus is the one who decreed to restore and to build Jerusalem and the temple. This decree also fulfilled Jeremiah's prophecy when he prophesied of Jerusalem: "this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment..." (Jeremiah 25:11), until "...when seventy years are accomplished..." (Jeremiah 25:12). It was of Cyrus that Isaiah had prophesied centuries before his birth: "I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will direct all his ways: he shall build my city, and he shall let go my captives" (Isaiah 45:13). And when the time had come, the prophecy was fulfilled when Cyrus decreed the liberation of the exile Hebrew nation. Cyrus' edict also assured the Jews' liberty to restore Jerusalem and the temple. So the Chronicles link together in one decree the two events: the liberation of the Jewish exiles and the laying of the temple's corner stone. That decree is therefore the starting point to count the number of years for the fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy of the Messiah, and also for the counting of the 2300 year prophecy until the beginning of Judgment in Heaven.

Cyrus' decree (See 2 Chronicles 36:22-23) reiterates the fact that the prophecy concerned was not just the seventy years for the desolation of Jerusalem and the Babylonian captivity, but more importantly the foundation stone for the temple (see Isaiah 44:28). This decree is what Daniel referred to as "the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem" (Daniel 9:25). The wording of the decree is rewritten in the writings of Ezra 1:1-2, so that this historical landmark should not be forgotten by future generations of believers.

The 2300 Years Prophecy Reaches Year 6000 A.M.

Cyrus performed all the pleasure of the Lord (Isaiah 44:28). He passed the decree to rebuild the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem exactly in the year 3700. This was the same year in which Daniel the prophet prayed earnestly to God for the prophecy of Jeremiah to be fulfilled that there should be only seventy years for the desolation of Jerusalem. Daniel also prayed that Jeremiah's prophecy should be fulfilled as the Lord had revealed because in that very chronological year 3700 God alerted him to the fact that there is another time prophecy pertaining to God's everlasting plan of salvation. This prophecy perplexed Daniel because of the span of time that it encompassed, which would elongate the chronology of this world's history by 2300 years (Daniel 8:14), thus, reaching, the year 6000.

$$3700 + 2300 = 6000$$

But Daniel was worried about the fulfillment of God's word and requested God's clemency as he pleaded on behalf of Israel that their sins be forgiven. Daniel knew that Israel's apathy towards God's prophecies would bring about a postponement of God's promise for Israel's liberation from Babylonian exile.

Although Daniel was waiting for the liberation of the people of Israel from Babylon, his hope of all hopes was nothing less than the coming of the Messiah. So when God revealed to Daniel that there would be 483 years into the future until the Messiah (Daniel 9:24), he was disheartened because of the promise's prolongation. But more than that, having to wait 2300 years until the cleansing of the sanctuary, which Daniel knew meant the time of God's judgment, was difficult to bear, as he was told: "...Understand, O son of man: for at the time of the end shall be the vision" (Dan 8:17). Daniel fainted and was sick several days (Daniel 8:27).

The angel explained to Daniel that seventy weeks were determined for his people Israel (Daniel 9:24). Seventy weeks in Bible prophecy is equivalent to 490 years.

$$70 \times 7 = 490 \text{ Years}$$

Now if we add the 490 years of Daniel 9:24 to the chronological year 3700 when Cyrus decreed the rebuilding of the temple, it will take us to the chronological year 4190. This was the year when the prophecy of Daniel 9:24 was fulfilled. Namely, that the time determined for the people of Israel was over. The Hebrews had forfeited the blessing of the Gospel and it was given over to the Gentiles. Israel sealed their rejection of the Gospel; firstly because they crucified the Lord Jesus and secondly because they had martyred Stephen in the year 4190 which corresponds to the year 34 A.D.

$$3700 + 490 = 4190$$

In the chronological year 6000 the prophecy of Daniel 8:14 regarding the 2300 years was fulfilled. This was the year 1844 A.D. when the judgment began in the Heavenly Sanctuary. Now, in order to corroborate that the year 6000 is equivalent to the year 1844 A.D., let us do an arithmetical subtraction. Let us subtract from the chronological year 6000 of the prophecy in Daniel 8:14 the chronological year 4190 of the prophecy in Daniel 9:24. The difference is a total of 1810 years.

$$6000 - 4190 = 1810 \text{ years}$$

Now because the chronological year 4190 is equivalent to the year 34 A.D., if we add to the year 34 A.D. those 1810 years, which is the mathematical difference of the previous subtraction, then we reach the year 1844 A.D. Therefore 1844 A.D. was not only the year 6000, but also the year when the prophecy of the 2300 years of Daniel 8:14 was fulfilled and Judgment was inaugurated by our High Priest Jesus in the Most Holy Place of the Heavenly Sanctuary.

$$70 \times 7 = 490 \text{ years}$$

$$3700 + 490 = 4190$$

$$6000 - 4190 = 1810 \text{ years}$$

$$\text{A.D. } 34 + 1810 = 1844 \text{ A.D.}$$

Isaiah's Prophecy of Jesus' Birth Fulfilled in 4153 A.M. (3 B.C.)

Isaiah prophesied about "the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace," given to us as a child (Isaiah 9:6). This prophecy was fulfilled in the chronological year 4153. Let us do some calculations to confirm the date of Jesus' birth. The Lord Jesus was baptized in the chronological year 4183 at the age of 30 years (Luke 3:23). By knowing the prophecies of Daniel we can calculate the exact year when the Lord was born. That is how the faithful prophets, the shepherds, and the wise men from the east knew about Jesus' birth at the exact time of the prophecy's fulfillment. Knowing that the Lord Jesus was baptized in the chronological year 4183, we then subtract from it the 30 years of the Lord's age on the day of His baptism to give us the chronological year 4153 when He was born.

$$4183 - 30 = 4153$$

Given that the chronological year 6000 corresponds to the year 1844 A.D., biblical chronology will also confirm that the Lord Jesus' birth year 4153 is the equivalent to the calendar year 3 B.C. Once again we do an arithmetical subtraction. We subtract from the chronological year 6000 the chronological year 4153 to give us a difference of 1847 years. Now to convert the chronological year 4153 into our current calendar we subtract from the year 1844 A.D. those 1847 years. Therefore, the chronological year 4153 equals the year 3 B.C. of our current calendar when the Lord Jesus was born.

$$6000 - 4153 = 1847 \text{ years}$$

$$1844 \text{ A.D.} - 1847 = 3 \text{ B.C.}$$

Daniel's Prophecy of Messiah Prince Fulfilled in 4183 A.M. (27 A.D.)

Having understood that the year 1844 A.D. was the year when the prophecy of Daniel 8:14 was fulfilled and that it was exactly the year 6000, it will also be corroborated that the year 27 A.D. was the year when the Lord Jesus, the Messiah Prince prophesied in Daniel 9:24-25, was anointed. Daniel prophesied that the anointing of the Messiah would take place when 69 prophetic weeks or 483 years had passed. This

magnificent event took place in the chronological year 4183 when our Lord Jesus was anointed by the Holy Spirit (Luke 3:22) (Review charts).

Let us do some arithmetic calculations. First, we multiply the 69 prophetic weeks by 7 days to give us a total 483 days or prophetic years. Then, if we add the 483 years to the chronological year 3700 (year when the prophecy set off), we find that it takes us to the chronological year 4183 when the Messiah was anointed.

$$69 \times 7 = 483 \text{ years}$$

$$3700 + 483 = 4183$$

Now if from the chronological year 6000 we subtract the chronological year 4183 when our Lord Jesus was baptized, we get a difference of 1817 years.

But now we are going to use the year 1844 A.D. of our modern calendar in combination with the difference of those two chronological years ($6000 - 4183 = 1817$) to confirm that the year 27 A.D. is the exact date when the Lord Jesus was anointed. This process will further confirm the truthfulness of the year 1844 A.D. as the exact date for the fulfillment of Daniel 8:14. Up to this point, we have rightfully ascertained that the chronological year 6000 is equivalent to the year 1844 A.D., and now we will see how that year also confirms the date of the Lord's anointing. The arithmetic once again is easy to understand; all we need to do is subtract from the year 1844 A.D. those 1817 years and it will give us a difference of 27 A.D., which was the year when the Messiah Jesus was baptized and anointed.

$$6000 - 4183 = 1817 \text{ years}$$

$$1844 \text{ A.D.} - 1817 \text{ years} = 27 \text{ A.D.}$$

What was the Year 456 B.C.?

It has been shown in chapter 7 of this book that in the chronological year 3700 Isaiah's prophecy about King Cyrus was fulfilled. In that year King Cyrus issued the decree to build the temple and to liberate Israel from Babylonian captivity. To Daniel it was revealed that the year 3700 when Cyrus issued the magnanimous decree, ("the going forth of the commandment to restore and rebuild Jerusalem" Daniel 9:25) was the date to begin counting the years until the manifestation of the Messiah.

To understand Cyrus' chronological year 3700 in our modern calendar we have to resort to the Biblical data that has been given us regarding the time when the Lord Jesus was anointed. We know that Jesus was anointed to the ministry in the chronological year 4183, which corresponds to our modern calendar year 27 A.D.

To Daniel it was revealed that the Messiah would be manifested to Israel when 483 years would have passed. This prophecy was fulfilled in the year 4183 (27 A.D.) when Jesus was baptized. Now to confirm the exact year when Cyrus performed all the pleasure of God (Isaiah 44:28) by issuing the decreed we work with the number 27 and 483. Therefore, from the year 27 A.D. we subtract those 483 years and it will take us to the corresponding year 456 B.C. of our current world calendar.

$$\text{A.D. } 27 - 483 = 456 \text{ B.C.}$$

Now we understand that the year 3700 when Cyrus granted Israel's freedom and the right to rebuild the temple (Isaiah 44:28;45:13) corresponds to the year 456 B.C., the starting date of Daniel 8:14. This prophecy will be further developed in a later chapter. But for the moment let us corroborate that date from another arithmetical point of view.

At this point you will understand how vital it is to rely solely on the Word of God. If from the chronological year 6000 we subtract the chronological year 3700 it gives us the difference of 2300 years of Daniel 8:14. Now, if we subtract from 1844 A.D. those 2300 years we get the difference of 456 B.C.

$$6000 - 3700 = 2300 \text{ years}$$

$$1844 \text{ A.D.} - 2300 = 456 \text{ B.C.}$$

Prophecy of the Lord Jesus's Sacrifice Fulfilled in 4187 A.M. (31 A.D.)

To Daniel it was revealed that starting from the year when Cyrus decreed to restore Jerusalem until the sacrifice of the Messiah there would be sixty nine and a half prophetic weeks. Daniel 9:25-27 reveals that the Messiah was sacrificed in the middle of the prophetic week number 70; that is, in the middle of the last seven years of the overall period of 490 years determined for the Jews. The middle of 7 can neither be 4 nor 3 but 3.5. Therefore, the year 31 A.D. is the year that fulfils the prophecy and it has to be taken from the first part of the year 31 A.D., which corresponds to the chronological year 4187.

Given that the prophecy of Daniel 8:14 was fulfilled in the chronological year 6000 (1844 A.D.), we subtract from 6000 the chronological year 4187 of Jesus' crucifixion to get the difference of 1813 years. Then to convert the chronological year 4187 into our modern calendar year we subtract from our calendar year 1844 A.D. those 1813 years to give us the difference of 31 A.D.

$$6000 - 4187 = 1813 \text{ years}$$

$$1844 \text{ A.D.} - 1813 = 31 \text{ A.D.}$$

Once again this biblical chronology confirms the truthfulness of our faith in the year 31 A.D. as the year when our Lord Jesus was sacrificed.

Gospel to Gentiles Year 4190 A.M. (34 A.D.)

Daniel was told by the angel: "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy" (Daniel 9:24).

Those 70 prophetic weeks represent a span of 490 years for the Gospel to be preached to the people of Israel, until they would it and seal their rejection with the persecution of the church, and in particular with the stoning to death of Stephen (Acts 7:59). Paul, who later converted to the Gospel of our Lord Jesus,

consented to Stephen's death: "at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles" (Acts 8:1). Moreover, Paul "made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison" (Acts 8:3). From then on the everlasting righteousness spoken of by Daniel was preached to the Gentiles as the 490 years or 70 prophetic weeks of Daniel 9:24 had been fulfilled for the people of Israel. "Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word (Acts 8:4).

Applying Ezekiel's principle that in prophecy a day is equivalent to a year, we conclude that Daniel is speaking of 490 years assigned for the Gospel to be preached to the people of Israel. Those 490 years were cut off from the longer period of 2300 years, and they are also counted from the chronological year 3700 when Cyrus decreed to restore and to build Jerusalem. If we add the 490 years to the chronological year 3700 of Daniel 9:24 we come to the chronological year 4190.

$$70 \times 7 = 490$$

$$3700 + 490 = 4190$$

To convert the chronological year 4190 into the current calendar system we subtract from the chronological year 6000 the chronological year 4190 to get a difference of 1810 years. Then, from the year 1844 A.D. we subtract those 1810 years and it will rightly take us to the year 34 A.D. when the Gospel was taken from the Jews and given to the Gentiles.

$$6000 - 4190 = 1810 \text{ years}$$

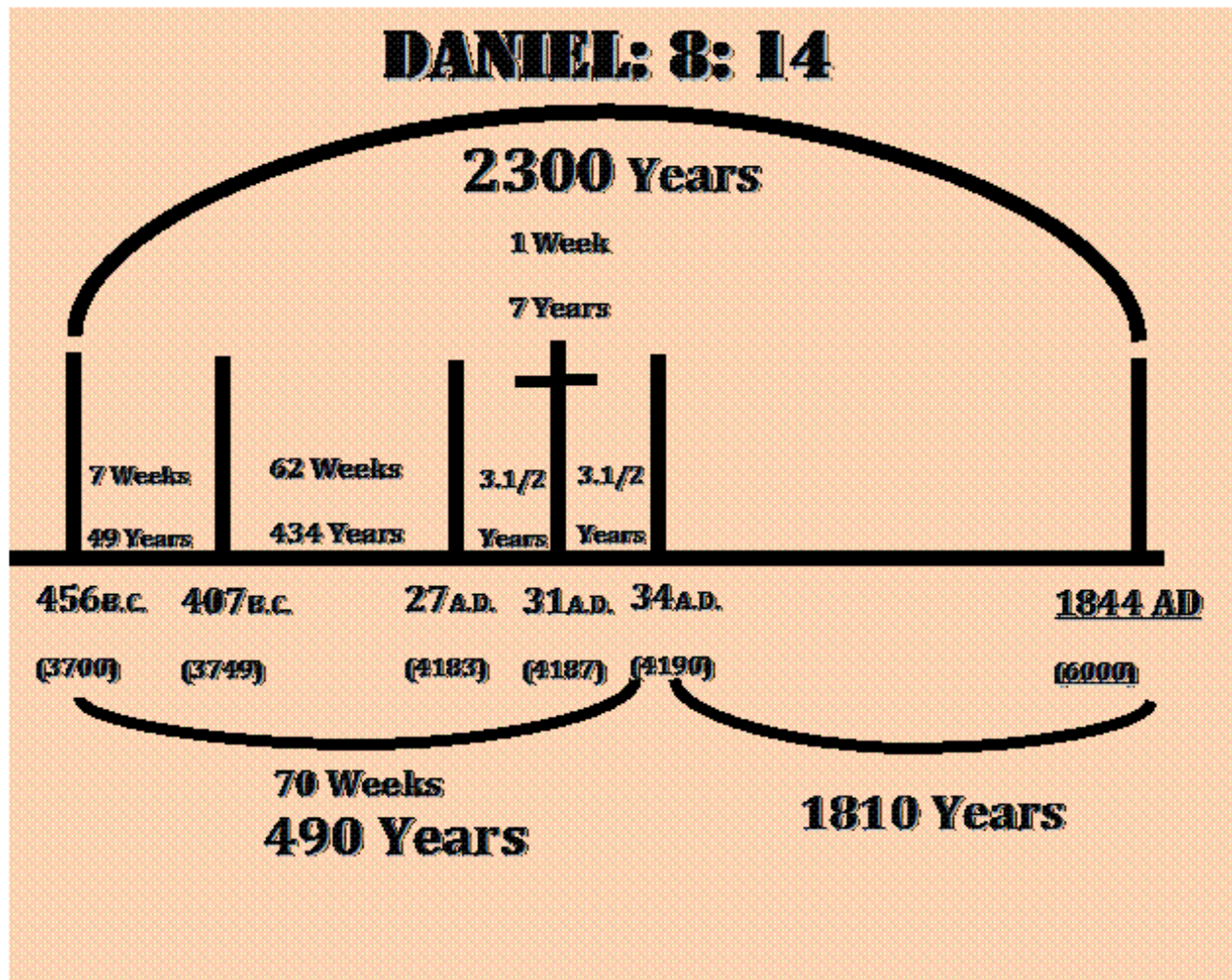
$$1844 \text{ A.D.} - 1810 = 34 \text{ A.D.}$$

Chart of Prophetic Calculations

PROPHECY	FULFILMENT	CALCULATIONS	TEXT	YEAR
King Cyrus' Decree	Temple's Foundation 3700 = 456 B.C.	6000 - 3700 = 2300 A.D. 1844 - 2300 = 456 B.C.	Daniel 8:14 Daniel 9:25	3700 A.M. (456 B.C.)
2nd Jewish Temple 7x7 = 49 Years	Temple Finished 3700 + 49 = 3749	FROM GOING FORTH OF DECREE 6000 - 3749 = 2251 1844 A.D. - 2251 = 407	Daniel 9:25	3749 A.M. (407 B.C.)
Jesus' Birth	The year of Jesus' Baptism in 4183 A.M. He was 30	4183 - 30 = 4153 Jesus Birth Year	Luke 3:23	4153 A.M. (3 B.C.)

	years old	6000 - 4153 = 1847 1844 A.D. - 1847 = 3 B.C.		
Jesus in the Temple	Jesus was 12 Years of Age	6000-4165 = 1835 1844 A.D.-1835= 9 A.D.	Luke 2:41 Luke 2:42	4165 A.M. (9 A.D.)
Anointment 69 weeks 69x7 = 483 Years	of Jesus Cyrus' decree 3700 + 483 = 4183 (27A.D.)	ANOINT THE MOST HOLY 6000 - 4183 = 1817A.D. 1844 - 1817 Years = 27A.D.	Daniel 9:24, 25	4183 A.M. (27 A.D.)
Crucifixion of Jesus 3 ¹ / ₂ “weeks”	69 x 7 = 483 Half week equals 3.5 483 + 3.5 = 486.5 (31 A.D.)	MESSIAH CAUSED SACRIFICE TO CEASE 6000 - 4186.5 = 1813.5 1844 A.D. - 1813.5 = 30.5 OR 31 (Half of 7 is 3 ¹ / ₂)	Daniel 9:27	4187 A.M. (31 A.D.)
Martyrdom of Stephen 70 Weeks 70 x 7= 490 Years	3700 + 490 = 4190 (34 A.D.)	6000 - 4190 = 1810 1844 A.D. -1810 = 34 A.D. GOSPEL TO GENTILES	Daniel 9:24	4190 A.M. (34 A.D.)
INVESTIGATIVE JUDGMENT 6000 = 1844 A.D.	TIME OF THE END 3700 + 2300 = 6000 (1844 A.D.)	6000 - 4190 = 1810 2300 - 490 = 1810 (see Stephens Stoning year) A.D. 34 + 1810 = 1844 A.D.	Daniel 8:14	6000 A.M. (1844 AD)

The following chart is to simplify the chronology and prophecy of Daniel 8:14 regarding the Messiah.



CHAPTER TWENTY

BATTLES AGAINST THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Judeo-Christian Roots

As the persecution against the church broke out in Jerusalem in 4190 (34 A.D.), the church widened its horizons and spread abroad. These persecuted Christians, who were mainly Jews, had had their roots in the patriarchal church of Old Testament times. Isaiah referred to this church as “the branch of the LORD” (Isaiah 4:2). Paul, being a Jew, referred to the Israelite church as his kinsmen, the ones to whom belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises (Romans 9:4). Christ was born into the Jewish religion. It was of the Jews, “of whom concerning the flesh Christ came” (Romans 9:5). No wonder, Paul desires that his kinsmen, the Jews, were all saved (Romans 9:3). But he recognizes that “they are not all Israel, which are of Israel” (Romans 9:6), “Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children” (Romans 9:7). However, Paul confirmed the fact that God reserved for Him a residue of faithful Jews; he quotes Isaiah: “Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved” (Romans 9:27). It was God’s doing, as Paul continues: “And as Esaias said before, except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodoma, and been made like unto Gomorrha” (Romans 9:29).

Minutes before his execution in 4190 Stephen preached of what he termed: “The church in the wilderness” (Acts 7:38), referring to the Jewish religion. Stephen spoke of them as the descendants of Israel; that is, the “fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us” (Acts 7:38). Following the same train of thought, Paul asks “What advantage then hath the Jew?” (Romans 3:1), invariably, the evangelist responds to this question, and says: “Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God” (Romans 3:2). But some would argue contrarily, and say: “For what if some did not believe?” (Romans 3:3). Then Paul casts a rhetorical question: “Shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?” (Romans 3:3) to which, he exclaims: “God forbid” (Romans 3:4).

Did the majority of the Jews accept the Lord Jesus as their Creator God? No! But, I know of one Jew who accepted Jesus for what He is... John said: “And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life” (1 John 5:20). To the rest of the Jews Paul rehearsed the words of Isaiah who prophesied of the Lord Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross: “All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people” (Romans 10:21, see also Isaiah 65:2).

Now the question is... Are we going to deem of no validity the oracles of God committed to the Jews because of their unbelief and rejection of the Messiah? Take, for instance, this oracle: “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy... The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God” (Exodus 20:8, 10). Are we going to refrain from keeping Saturday holy because it is an emblem of those who rejected the Lord Jesus, the Jews? Please understand that God’s seventh day of rest was not only given to the Jews but to all the human race; it was given by God at the outset of time from the creation week; thus the Scriptures read: “God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all

his work which God created and made” (Genesis 2: 3). That is why Paul, the Christian Jew, continued keeping Saturday as the only true Day of the Lord when he was in Antioch (Acts 13:14), in Jerusalem (Acts 13:27), in the synagogues, with the Gentiles (Acts 13:42,44; 15:21), in Philippi of Macedonia (Acts 16:12,13), in the synagogue of the Jews at Thessalonica (Acts 17:1,2), and in Corinth he persuaded the Jews and the Greeks every Sabbath (Acts 18:1,4).

In his appeal to the church in Rome, Paul counsels Christians not to become boastful by thinking themselves better than the Jews and not to pride themselves as having achieved a higher status than that of the Jews (see Romans chapter 11). With such counsel Paul is urging the Christian Church to shun the evil of nationalism that indoctrinates its adherents with ideas of superiority and supremacy over others. The apostle exhorts us with the words: “And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree, boast not against the branches...” (Romans 11:17-18); that is, do not boast against the Jews who disobeyed the Scriptures and rejected the Messiah.

Arrogant boasting by later Christians resulted in the persecution of the Jews. They were ostracized as most detested pests because of their rejection and crucifixion of the Lord Jesus. But of course, the persecution was not intended against the Jews only, but against any Christian church that adhered to the faith of the apostles who were solely Jews. Therefore, it is vital that we follow Paul’s exhortation to the Gentile Christian Church not to boast against its roots: “For if the first fruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches” (Romans 11:16).

The Rock Upon Which the Church Stands

Reader, if you are a Roman Catholic, do you believe it is possible that the head of the church might be a mere fallen man? The Papacy teaches so! Had that been the case, the Christian Church would have ceased to exist a long time ago. But you may ask: Who is that Rock that the Lord Jesus speaks of when He says “upon this Rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it? (Matt. 16:18). Paul gives the answer when he speaks of the church in Moses’ time: “And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ” (1 Corinthians 10:4). The only One upon Whom the gates of hell (the grave) did not prevail was the Lord Jesus. Moreover, it was prophesied of Him that His body would not undergo decay in the tomb: “For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption” (Psalms 16:10). Therefore, Peter explained what David had prophesied about the Lord Jesus: “He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses” (Acts 2:31-32).

The Christian Church believers were honored to inherit the knowledge of salvation from the Jewish nation. The true Christians were not boastful, and therefore did not change the Commandments of God. They didn’t attempt to replace the Lord Jesus as the Head of the Church. Because of their loyalty to God, thousands of those faithful witnesses were put to death; they rest in their graves until resurrection day; “Of whom the world was not worthy” (Hebrews 11:38). Yet, of them it is also written: “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord... their works do follow them” (Revelation 14:13).

Although they were slain, their testimony remains as an encouragement for us to be faithful. James was killed with the sword (Acts 12:2), Peter was killed stretching forth his hands as he was crucified (John 21:17-19), “others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings... they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented” (Hebrews 11:26-37). John was an outcast on the island of Patmos “for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Revelation 1:9). And Paul’s final encouragement for the young Timothy was: “Watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry. For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand” (2 Timothy 4:5-6).

The Mystery of Iniquity Unmasked

From the year 4190 A.M. (34 A.D.) it was fulfilled what the Lord Jesus had prophesied, that: “the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles” (Acts 28:28). The Lord Jesus told His hearers: “Did ye never read in the scriptures, ‘The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes?’ Therefore say I unto you, the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof” (Matt. 21:42-43).

The apostles were persecuted and killed, just as the Lord Jesus suffered afflictions and torture, suffering the death of the cross. Our Lord had warned His young church concerning what lay ahead for their lives, saying: “if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?” (Luke 23:31). But physical persecution was nothing compared to the cunning deceptions of the religious leaders that infiltrated the Christian Church to bring them into subjection. The Lord Jesus had also counseled: “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves” (Matt. 7:15).

Those wolves in sheep’s clothing were in operation in the days of Paul, who wrote: “For the mystery of iniquity doth already work” (2 Thessalonians 2:7). Nonetheless, the apostle encouraged the church to search the Scriptures, advising them that the second coming of the Lord would not occur until “there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition” (2 Thessalonians 2:3). Here there is no reference to Judas Iscariot as the son of perdition, although he also received that woeful title (John 17:12). It is referring to a religious system commanded by a hierarchy represented by one “who opposeth and exalted himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God” (2 Thessalonians 2:4).

The man of perdition is a portrayal of a religious hierarchy commanded by a visible head as its leader who encourages its followers into worshipping him.

Remember that in the early Christian Church none of the faithful Jews ever received adoration from their fellow brothers. For example the faithful Peter, when he visited for the first time a Gentile centurion, “Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him... Peter stopped him, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man” (Acts 10:25-26). Peter gave us an example of faithfulness to God by refraining from worshipping any created being. Not even the holy angels allowed themselves to be worshipped (Revelation 19:10). We must only worship God (Matt. 4:10; Revelation 14:7; Revelation 22:9).

The Medieval Church State

When Emperor Constantine of the Roman Empire granted special favors to the Roman Catholic institution in A.D. 313, he was connecting with insiders of his own state religion. He wrote to Anulinus, proconsul of Africa: "... it is our wish that when you receive this letter, if any of these things belonged to the Catholic Church of the Christians, in any city or in other places, you shall cause them to be restored immediately to their churches."

In that same year Constantine who received insider information regarding his church and state religion and who felt that their newly-found church was being threatened by Bible-believing Christians and the power of the Gospel of truth, he wrote to Caecilian, Bishop of Carthage: "...since I have learned that some men of unstable mind wish to turn the people from the most holy and Catholic Church by shameful and corrupt courses, know that I have given command to Anulinus... that they should not tolerate this if it happened."

In connection with the apostate bishops who favored the cause for Sunday worship, Emperor Constantine on 7th March A.D. 321 signed into law the state recognition of Sunday as the day of rest. He wrote to Elpidius: "All judges, city people and craftsmen shall rest on the venerable day of the sun". Such recognition was to advance the Catholic religion, as they affirmed: "We hold our common assembly on the day of the sun because it is the first day on which God put to flight darkness and chaos and made the world, and on the same day Jesus Christ our Savior rose from the dead..." Bear in mind that God did not approve of such alteration of His Law of Ten Commandments, but it was prophesied that the mystery of iniquity would attempt to change God's Laws (Daniel 7:25).

From Constantine and onward, every Roman Emperor was zealous for advancing the progress of their newly formed church/state religion. The Roman Emperors themselves were responsible for officially establishing the Roman Catholic Church; it was the Emperors who gave the Papal church its current name 'Catholic'. Emperor Theodosius, who praised his newly established church/state religion, wrote in A.D. 380: "We authorize the followers of this law to assume the title of Catholic Christians; but as for the others, since, in our judgment, they are foolish madmen, we decree that they shall be branded with the ignominious name of heretics, and shall not presume to give to their conventicles the name of churches. They will suffer in the first place the chastisement of the divine condemnation and in the second the punishment which our authority, in accordance with the will of Heaven, shall decide to inflict." With such a menacing decree, Theodosius thought to stop the progress of the true Christian faith by threatening those who dared to obey God rather than men, who, under persecution, gathered together to worship God in their homes.

The Roman Emperor Zeno acted like those who manufacture a graven image and expect to receive protection from it, the work of their hands (Isaiah 45:20; Isaiah 46:6, 7). The emperors had created a religious system in the hope that it would grant them relief from their worst fears of extinction as an empire. Zeno wrote in A.D. 482 that their Roman Empire owed its continued existence to the Catholic Church: "The Emperor Zeno... to the very reverend bishops and clergy, and the monks and the people throughout Alexandria, Egypt, Libya and Pentapolis. We are convinced that the source and stay of our sovereignty, its strength and impregnable safeguard, is that only genuine and true faith...We therefore endeavor night and day by every means, by prayer, by strenuous exertions, by legislation, to promote in

every part the increase of the holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, the undefiable and immortal mother of our realm...” How absurd, the emperors created their own mother in order to receive protection from her.

The establishment of such a system of iniquity was not the product of an overnight effort. It took a long time and supernatural efforts. Yet, the Roman Catholic Papacy was favored by the Roman emperors, and very subtly and treacherously the Papacy overturned the roles; from being in subjection to the empire they became lords as they took over the empire’s rule. It was the Roman Emperor Justinian who championed the cause for the Papacy’s temporal power. Thus, “In the establishment of the Ecclesiastical Empire, Justinian holds the like place that Constantine and Theodosius occupy in the establishment of the Catholic Church.”

Jewish Heritage Upholds Jesus as the Chief Cornerstone

Notice that the prophets prophesied of the Lord Jesus as being the Corner Stone of the spiritual temple of believers. Thus, David prophesied of the Lord, saying: “The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner” (Psalms 118:22). Isaiah also prophesied of Him: “Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste” (Isaiah 28:16). Peter is not the head of the church, but he identified the real Head, our Lord Jesus, when he proclaimed: “This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:11-12 see also 1 Peter 2:5-7).

The whole matter that we have been saying is that the first Christians and the church leaders were Jews. They, however, did not boast or for that matter did not take upon themselves the authority to change or dispose of the oracles of God. They were ready to die for their faith rather than to modify God’s Commandments; as Peter said: “We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29). In that same line of thought James exhorted “the twelve tribes scattered abroad” (James 1:1) with the words: “so speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty” (James 2:12). “For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all” (James 2:10). Therefore, if God’s judgment is going to be based on the Ten Commandments, how much more important it is to obey God rather than men. Furthermore, our Savior did not change the Jewish milestones, as he said: “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill” (Matt. 5:17).

Notice that the Word of God presents God as the foundation stone upon which the Christian Church is founded. The Cornerstone is neither any of God’s disciples nor any human system. Therefore, Paul explains that the Head of the church is Jesus: “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 3:11). The Christian Church is therefore “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone” (Ephesians 2:20).

Heinous Crimes Against Humanity

When the Papal system came into power, which lasted for a period of 1260 years, they created villainous laws of impunity for their clergy so that their leaders could commit crimes against humanity and go unpunished. Very appropriately it is said of such a system:

“The noontide of the papacy was the world's moral midnight. The Holy Scriptures were almost unknown, not only to the people, but to the priests. Like the Pharisees of old, the papist leaders hated the light which would reveal their sins. God's law, the standard of righteousness, having been removed, they exercised power without limit, and practiced vice without restraint.”

The infamous Pope Boniface in A.D.1302 wrote: “If, therefore, the earthly power err, it shall be judged by the spiritual power; and if a lesser power err, it shall be judged by a greater. But if the supreme power err, it can only be judged by God, not by man. Furthermore we declare, state, define and pronounce that it is altogether necessary to salvation for every human creature to be subject to the Roman pontiff.” But the Papal system only protects those who are accomplices of their vices. Even in their retirement years, their own canon law gives the clergy impunity, as long as they adhere to their vows of obedience to the pope.

During the rule of Benedict of Nursia, who founded his own monastery for the preparation of the Catholic priesthood, he wrote regarding their clergy: “Indeed it is not allowed to the monks to have bodies or wills in their own power.” If the Papacy can achieve the brainwashing of those young students they can rob them of their free will, and thus the senior priests can have control over the young students’ minds and bodies. Now the end result is that the crimes committed by Catholic hierarchical authorities are learned and practiced by the inferior clergy. Then, the crimes of sexual abuse that begin in the Catholic monasteries continue with their vicious cycle in the greater society. Consequently, their priests rape and abuse those upon whom they exert authority and power. Thus, much of society’s sexual deviation breaks out from these brainwashing centers: the Catholic monasteries and convents. Yet those crimes go unpunished.

This brainwashing system, the Papacy, invented the deviant doctrine and practice of compulsory celibacy that forbids their clergy from expressing their affection toward the opposite sex in holy matrimony. This practice encourages the many deviant practices among the clergy. The Word of God clearly states that God does not force a person to remain celibate, but rather it counsels: “if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn” (1 Corinthians 7:9). Nonetheless, the Papacy’s enforced celibacy incites their clergy to burn in their immoral practices. Yet, the Word of God uncovers the immorality of such a world religious system with the words: “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils” (1 Timothy 4:1), “forbidding to marry” (1 Timothy 4:3).

Moreover, the Word of God condemns this idolatrous system as the initiator of homosexual practices because they “changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man (Romans 1:23). Therefore, they dishonored their own bodies between themselves (Romans 1:24), and they practiced “vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men ...” (Romans 1:26-27).

Heresies of a New Empire

The worldwide mystery of iniquity, the Papacy, got rid of the doctrine that proclaims the Lord Jesus as the Head of the Christian Church and established their visible head the Pope, in that role. The papacy also encourages the nations to kneel and worship the pope. See, for instance, the ecumenical meeting of Assisi in 1986 when world religious leaders worshipped the pope. The man of sin not only receives worship but also fosters pagan doctrines throughout the whole world. This iniquitous system propagated these false doctrines from within the Christian Church. Peter calls them: “false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord...” (2 Peter 2:1). This system has been very subtle in their denial of the preeminence of the Lord Jesus. They introduced the heresy of a mediatrix, a woman mediator for humanity, while the Holy Scriptures leave no doubt as to who the only Mediator is: “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time” (1 Timothy 2:5-6).

The medieval Papacy adopted the heresy of the immortality of the soul from the pagan philosopher Plato whose name is still in vogue in Catholic homilies around the world:

“Plato had taught that the souls of heroes, of illustrious men, and eminent philosophers, alone, ascended after death into the mansions of light and felicity, while those of the generality, weighed down by their lusts and passions, sunk into the infernal regions, whence they were not permitted to emerge before they were purified... Hence a notion prevailed that only the martyrs entered upon a state of happiness immediately after death; and that for the rest, a certain obscure region was assigned... This is the origin of the Catholic Purgatory.”

The old serpent called the Devil and Satan (Revelation 12:9) who deceived Eve with the lie: “ye shall not surely die” (Genesis 3:4) also employed through his right arm the Roman Papacy, his ancient deception of the immortality of the soul to introduce the heresy of praying to the spirits of the dead. This iniquitous system led their adherents to subtly reject the Lord Jesus as the only Mediator in Heaven by adopting the blasphemous practice of praying to the spirits of their dead. The Word of God clearly states of these spirits that “they are the spirits of devils, working miracles...” (Revelation 16:14).

Thus: “Many who professed conversion still clung to the tenets of their pagan philosophy, and not only continued its study themselves, but urged it upon others as a means of extending their influence among the heathen. Serious errors were thus introduced into the Christian faith. Prominent among these was the belief in man's natural immortality and his consciousness in death. This doctrine laid the foundation upon which Rome established the invocation of saints and the adoration of the virgin Mary. From this sprung also the heresy of eternal torment for the finally impenitent, which was early incorporated into the papal faith. Then the way was prepared for the introduction of still another invention of paganism, which Rome named purgatory, and employed to terrify the credulous and superstitious multitudes. By this heresy is affirmed the existence of a place of torment, in which the souls of such as have not merited eternal damnation are to suffer punishment for their sins, and from which, when freed from impurity, they are admitted to Heaven.”

Satan continues to deceive humanity through the false doctrine of the immortality of the soul. Firstly, by the curia's canonization of eminent Catholics who excelled in the formation of their pagan theology, such as Augustine and Aquinas, or by canonizing those who implemented the inquisition in order to defend the

Catholic tradition. Secondly, by repeating in their homilies the names of infidels like Socrates, Plato, Ptolemy, etc., whose pagan philosophies paved the way for the formation of the Catholic tradition. Satan struggles to maintain their allegiance to a wrong cause in the hope that one day their names will be beatified and kept alive in the minds of future generations.

A Pretense to Infallibility

In order for the Papacy to defend their hideous crimes, their abuse of power, and their usurpation of God's authority, they invented the heresy of Papal infallibility so that they could perpetuate their system of iniquity and brainwashing. In A.D. 1870 the infamous Pope Pius IX decreed: "We [i.e. pope Pius IX], teach and define as a dogma divinely revealed: That the Roman pontiff, when he speaks ex cathedra...is endowed with that infallibility... defining doctrine concerning faith or morals."

But the Papal system has erred time and again in morality and in doctrines; they have trampled and changed the truth of God for humanism. The Vatican, their center of divination, is spoken of in Revelation with the words: "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils..." (Revelation 18:2). No wonder the Anglican Church in its beginning issued a strong letter against the Papal heresies. The Bishop of Durham, John Cosin, wrote in A.D. 1660 "We... do not agree with the Roman Catholics in anything whereunto they now endeavor to convert us." Then he continued to enumerate a long list of Papal heresies which the Anglicans strongly opposed:

"2- That the pope of Rome is the vicar-general of Christ, or that he hath a universal jurisdiction over all Christians that shall be saved". 8- That there is a purgatory after this life, wherein the souls of the dead are punished, and from whence they are fetched out by the prayers and offerings of the living; and that there is no salvation possibly to be had by any that will not believe as much." 9- That the old saints departed, and all those dead men and women whom the pope hath of late canonized for saints or shall hereafter do so, whosoever they be, are and ought to be invoked by the religious prayers and devotions of all persons; and that they who do not believe this as an article of their Catholic Faith cannot be saved."

In view of the Word of God's doctrines, papal infallibility cannot be substantiated. The following are some of the major fallacies introduced by the Roman Papacy since it came to power. Take, for instance, the doctrines of one of the greatest heretical theologians in the Catholic religion, Augustine. He wrote: "God became man, that man might become God." But what kind of god do they become? They become like the prince of darkness sexually abusing thousands of innocent children, covering up these crimes against humanity, and when they are revealed they simply wash their hands of them.

Then Thomas Aquinas taught that any man can work for his own salvation. Moreover, he went so far as to say that Christ worked for his own salvation by his passion. He wrote: "Now it is clear that any man, established in grace, who suffers for righteousness' sake, merits salvation for himself by that very suffering. Hence Christ through his passion merited salvation not only for himself but for all his members." This is wickedness! Does that aberration also imply that the Catholic clergy can inflict torture and abuse on women and defenseless children because afterward their suffering will achieve them salvation?

In the Catholic system, the more blasphemous a philosophical view is, the more acceptance it receives. Consequently, the greatest humanist Aquinas, teaching people to be their own Saviors, was honored by the Papacy to be the major exponent of their tradition. “The teaching of Aquinas was set up by Leo XIII as the classical exposition of Catholic Doctrine.”

Impious Tradition Supplants Jesus as Savior

A system that cannot prove all things by the Word of God: the Word of God can do no other thing but to defend its sophisms by its so called tradition. Moreover, it upholds tradition above the Holy Scriptures. Our Lord Jesus strongly rebuked them when He told the Pharisees: “ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition” (Matt. 15:6).

Bear in mind that the Catholic tradition was not developed overnight; it took a long time. Their tradition is the work of dirty politics; one introduces a bill and another signs it into law. Likewise, in the Papacy they have developed a long tradition of practices and beliefs of basing their doctrines on the sophisms of their predecessors; one introduces a sophism and another perfects it. Take, for instance, the sophism introduced in A.D. 1854 by Pope Pius IX who alleged through his ‘immaculate conception theory’ that Mary the mother of Jesus was conceived without original sin, a theory taken from the infamous Augustine. A century later in 1950 A.D. Pope Pius XII made such a sophism a doctrine for the Catholics, but not before he made improvements to it by the addition of another deception, the assumption of Mary. This doctrine teaches that she was taken to heaven seconds after her death. Furthermore, he wrote a long list of blasphemies against God when he rewarded their old sophism that: Mary is ‘the mother of God’ “...from all eternity united in a mysterious way with Jesus Christ by one and the same decree of predestination, immaculate in her conception, in her divine motherhood... who bore off the triumph over sin... finally achieved, as the supreme crown of her privileges, that she should be preserved immune from the corruption of the tomb, and, like her Son before her, having conquered death, should be carried up, in body and soul, to the celestial glory of Heaven, to reign there as Queen at the right hand of her Son...” This is heretical humanism of the highest order! The Papacy dares to take the prerogatives of God and bestow them upon a human being whom they teach to be another Savior.

Using their tenet of the immortality of the soul, the Papacy formulated a major blow against Christianity. With their blasphemous and heretical doctrine of the assumption of Mary, they have also dethroned, at least from the minds of the common people, the eternal King of kings Jesus. They teach that Mary is the mother of God; but according to the Word of God the Lord Jesus, as God, is “Without father, without mother” (Hebrews 7:3). Their doctrine also maintains that she has been from eternity, while the Word of God clearly proclaims that it is Jesus who alone fits the description of “having neither beginning of days” (Hebrews 7:3) because only God is immortal and eternal. The Scriptures proclaim: “Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen” (1 Timothy 1:17). According to the Papacy Mary was conceived without sin and triumphed over sin; but the Word of God again affirms that only Jesus was without sin and triumphed over it: “He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15). They make Mary co-redeemer with Jesus as an “ally of the Redeemer”, while the Word of God states that Jesus is the only Savior: “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). And finally, in their thirst for usurping Jesus’ glory, the Papacy attributed to Mary the

prerogative of Divinity by claiming for her the Old Testament prophecy about the Lord Jesus: “For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption” (Psalms. 16:10).

Battle Against the Heavenly Sanctuary

In 2666 A.M. Satan devised a scheme to annihilate from the earth the knowledge of the Law of God and bring disrepute upon God’s Heavenly Sanctuary truth. When at the base of Mount Sinai Satan induced the Israelites to make a molten calf, he introduced a humanistic style of worship that cast a shadow on the Heavenly Sanctuary doctrine for the redemption of this world. Satan thought to eradicate from the face of the earth God’s perfect knowledge about Heaven’s plan of salvation even before the people of God had made a covenant with the Lord.

For a brief moment the Israelites were deceived with the idea that they were worshipping God by sacrificing to the calf. But they were not ignorant of God’s displeasure regarding idolatry, as the Lord said to Moses: “They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them...” (Exodus 32:8). The sentence: “These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt” (Exodus 32:4) referred to the abomination of the Egyptians. Satan intended to dethrone from the peoples’ hearts the true God and make them believe that every person on earth worships the same god.

When Moses made Israel drink of the unusual broth whose ingredients were nothing else but their molten calf of gold and water (Exodus 32:20), he gave them a strong rebuke that applies even more so to the children of God in the world today. The religions of the world, and more specifically the Catholic system, teaches its adherents that they can drink the very blood of God in order to receive the blessings from the sacrament.

Accordingly, the Papacy has introduced a system of worship that eradicates the truth about the Heavenly Sanctuary doctrine by making people believe that by eating the Eucharist they are in a substantial way eating God in their so called ‘Sacramentum Christus’ or Christi, which is Latin for ‘Sacrament of Christ’. The word sacrament is not found in the Word of God, it is a Roman Catholic word that conveys a superstitious belief referring to the act of conferring a special virtue on those who receive a sacrament, in this case the Eucharist. Since the Middle Ages the Papacy has been teaching Thomas Aquinas’ doctrine of Transubstantiation, the belief that the Catholic priest can convert the bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus. But such superstitious belief is nothing other than a copy of the Osirian Sacrament from which the doctrine of the Eucharist is derived. The Osirian Sacrament is a cannibalistic practice in which practitioners believe that virtues and powers of the person eaten can be absorbed by the eater. Charles Chiniquy wrote in his autobiographical book:

“When a priest of Rome, I was bound, with all the Roman Catholics, to believe that Christ had taken His own body, with His own hands, to His mouth; and that He had eaten Himself, not in a spiritual, but in a substantial way! After eating Himself, He had given it to each of His disciples, who then ate Him also!!”

Before you read how the Catholic tenets have supplanted the doctrine of the Heavenly Sanctuary study what the Word of God teaches about the sanctuary on earth. When the temple of Solomon was dedicated in 3207, “...the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of the LORD unto his place, into the oracle of the house, to the Most Holy Place...” (1 Kings 8:6). “There was nothing in the ark save the two tables of

stone, which Moses put there at Horeb..." (1 Kings 8:9). The temple's Most Holy Place which contained the ark, was a representation of the true Sanctuary in Heaven, which is "the temple of God...where was seen...the ark of his testament..." (Revelation 11:19). This is where Jesus is "a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man" (Hebrews 8:2).

Now notice how the Roman Papacy supplanted the Heavenly Sanctuary doctrine with the idolatrous system of the Eucharist. Whenever Catholic priests perform the Eucharist, which they define as the sacrifice of the mass, they do it on a long table denominated the altar, where they believe they are carrying out the actual sacrifice of Christ. Right behind their altar, they have a coffer called in Latin the Sacarium, or Sacristy in English. This is a chest where they put the monstrance, which in turn is a golden vessel in the form of a cross with a circular hollow in the middle with golden sunbeams where they deposit and keep the consecrated host for adoration.

You see how sacrilegious, blasphemous and idolatrous such worship is. Either ignorantly or knowingly, the Catholic priests are carrying out the role of anti-Christ. The sacrifice of the Lord Jesus was not carried out many times but only once. It was carried out by Jesus Himself, not another "priest". The Word of God says: "...for this he did once, when he offered up himself" (Hebrews 7:27). Moreover, the Lord Jesus is not enclosed in a coffer by the whim of sinful men, nor is he on earth, but "The LORD is in his holy temple, the LORD'S throne is in heaven..." (Psalms 11:4). The Lord is where He said He would return to. The Bible says: "So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God" (Mark 16:19).

In the idolatrous Roman Catholic system, their sacristy has supplanted the ark of the covenant of God, their monstrance has supplanted the Ten Commandments of God, and by their crowning act of blasphemy, their Eucharist has supplanted the Lord Jesus Himself. This is wickedness! Great multitudes of people have been deceived with the Papal tenet that the real Lord of Heaven is in that circular wafer which is nothing else but the adoration the sun-god Osiris. No wonder, brother Chiniquy expressed his horror when he confessed:

"I have often been asked: Was it possible that you sincerely believed that the wafer could be changed into God by you? And have you really worshipped that wafer as your Savior? To my shame, and to the shame of poor humanity, I must say 'Yes'."

It was the Papacy who indoctrinated the people of all nations with the heresy that the sacrifice of Jesus is carried out over and over again by the priest. The Word of God states that the Lord Jesus does not offer himself often (Hebrews 9:25). It was a once for all sacrifice, or else He would have suffered many times since the foundation of the world (Hebrews 9:26). But it is the Papacy's murderous desire to keep Jesus, if it were possible, always hanging on the cross, which is why they make a representation of a crucified man, which they unhesitatingly teach is 'Christ crucified'. Just to make it more palatable to the senses of the ignorant people they place the 'sacrificed god' inside a monstrance in the form of a white round wafer for people to come and worship. The alarmed man of God said:

"No words can give any idea of the pleasure I used to feel when alone, prostrated before the Christ whom I had made at the morning Mass, I poured out my heart at His feet. It is impossible for those who have not

lived under those terrible illusions to understand with what confidence I spoke to the Christ who was then before me...”

On the Seat of the Dragon

This system of wickedness has supplanted everything that is from God. The Roman Papacy has attempted to change the day of rest from the seventh day Sabbath to the first day of the week Sunday, the day of Osiris the sun-god (Daniel 7:25). And they did not hide it much from the sight of their followers because they gave to their wafer god the roundness of their sun-god. No wonder the Catholic system fits the Biblical description: “he shall speak great words against the most High” (Daniel 7:25). Then Paul unmasks them and calls this system “the man of sin” and “son of perdition” (2 Thessalonians 2:3). And quite correctly too, because he “opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God” (2 Thessalonians 2:4).

Moreover the Papacy sinks the whole world into further idolatry and blasphemy by encouraging the multitudes to a mere man “holy father”. The Lord Jesus clearly commanded His church to “call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven” (Matt. 23:9). But the man of sin makes himself be called “holy father” when the only Holy Father is God in Heaven. The Lord Jesus said: “And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me...” (John 17:11). And in Isaiah 9:6, our Savior is called “The mighty God, The everlasting Father.”

The Mystery of Iniquity Exerts Power for 1260 Years

The Word of God reveals how the mystery of iniquity, the Roman Papacy, would exert its tyrannical power for a period of 1260 years (Revelation 11:3; Revelation 12:6). Consequently, “the year A.D. 538, which marks the conquest of Italy, the deliverance of Rome, and the destruction of the kingdom of the Ostrogoths, is the true date which marks the establishment of the temporal authority of the papacy, and the exercise of that authority as a world-power.”

Paul, who understood the prophecies of the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus, wrote: “Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition” (2 Thessalonians 2:3). John prophesied of this system of iniquity when he wrote that “...the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority” (Revelation 13:2). This system is also portrayed as a ‘beast,’ which in prophecy means kingdom (Daniel 7:23). Thus, John continues: “And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast” (Revelation 13:3). “Not till after the great apostasy, and the long period of the reign of the “man of sin,” can we look for the advent of our Lord. The “man of sin,” who is also styled the “mystery of iniquity,” the “son of perdition,” and “that wicked,” represents the papacy, which, as foretold in prophecy, was to maintain its supremacy for 1260 years. This period ended in 1798.”

In reiterating the history of the mystery of iniquity, “the 1260 years of papal supremacy began with the establishment of the papacy in A.D. 538, and would therefore terminate in 1798. At that time a French army entered Rome, made the pope a prisoner, and he died in exile. Though a new pope was soon afterward elected, the papal hierarchy has never since been able to wield the power which it before possessed.”

It was Napoleon Bonaparte who ordered the French armies, commanded by General Berthier, to march against Rome. Thus, the “French forces reached the outskirts of Rome on February 9, 1798, and six days later they occupied the city itself without opposition. On February 20, Pius VI was carried into exile at the hands of the French, signaling the end of the long period of papal dominance in European affairs.” Thus we have that:

A.D. 1798 -
A.D. 538
= 1260 years

“The infliction of the deadly wound points to the downfall of the papacy in 1798. After this, says the prophet, “his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast.” Paul states plainly that the “man of sin” will continue until the Second Advent. 2 Thessalonians 2:3-8. To the very close of time he will carry forward the work of deception. And the revelator declares, also referring to the papacy: “All that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life” (Revelation 13:8). In both the Old and the New World, the papacy will receive homage in the honor paid to the Sunday institution, which rests solely upon the authority of the Roman Church.”

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

WHO TRAMPLED UPON GOD'S CHRONOLOGY

“And he shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time. He shall think to change times and laws” Daniel 7:25.

The Calendar in the Time of Noah

In his schemes to cover up his system of iniquity, Satan changed the calendar through his right arm the Papacy. This change confused the understanding of the Messianic prophecies and made it more difficult for the faithful believer to understand the prophecies, even those prophecies that uncover the anti-Christ wickedness.

Nevertheless, there has been one true calendar from the beginning of time. It has not changed in God's mind and it continues to be worthy of reckoning until the end of time.

Thus, in the Word of God we find many instances where God's calendar comprehends the establishment of days, months and years:

“And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years” (Genesis 1:14).

The first place we find God's calendar is at the time of the great world flood. The worldwide flood is recounted in Genesis in terms of its duration in the number of days and months. It also gives us the year when it happened: “In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month” (Genesis 7:11).

Now it has been written that the flood began in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month. Although the number of months that the flood waters prevailed over the surface of the earth is not stated in the Bible, the Word of God reveals the number of days: “the waters prevailed upon the earth an hundred and fifty days” (Genesis 7:24).

We know that the flood began on the second month and it lasted 150 days. Now the next verse will help us understand that each month contains 30 days each: “And the ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat” (Genesis 8:4). From the second month to the seventh month we have a total of 5 months; then if we divide the 150 days by those 5 months we find that a month in the Bible has 30 days:

$$150 \div 5 = 30$$

EVENT	MONTH	DAY OF THE MONTH	TEXT
Flood began	2nd month	17th day of the month	Genesis 7:11
The Ark rested on the ground	7th Month	17th day of the month	Genesis 8:4
Waters prevailed over the earth	150 Days		Genesis 7:24
TOTAL	5 Months	150 Days	

The Flood account reveals to us that God designed a calendar from the outset of time for the history of our planet. The flood account does not explain that God designed years of 360 days, yet, it shows that months have 30 days.

The Year Has Twelve Months

That the year has 12 months is understood by the reading of the Chronicles of King David who arranged his armies in twelve courses “of every course were twenty and four thousand”, to serve him throughout the year (1 Chronicles 27:1). Thus, each course with their officers “came in and went out month by month throughout all the months of the year...” (1 Chronicles 27:1). Accordingly, for the first month was Jashobeam (1 Chronicles 27:2), for the second month was Dodai (1 Chronicles 27:4), for the third month was Benaiah (1 Chronicles 27:5), for the fourth month was Asahel (1 Chronicles 27:7), for the fifth month was Shamhuth (1 Chronicles 27:8), for the sixth month was Ira (1 Chronicles 27: 9), for the seventh month was Helez (1 Chronicles 27:10), for the eighth month was Sibbecai (1 Chronicles 27: 11), for the ninth month was Abiezer (1 Chronicles 27:12), for the tenth month was Maharai (1 Chronicles 27:13), for the eleventh month was Benaiah (1 Chronicles 27:14), and the last of the twelve captains for the twelfth month was Heldai (1 Chronicles 27:15).

No.	Word of God Month's name	Text	Modern Jewish Months
1st	Abib	Exodus 12:2; 13:4; Deuteronomy 16:1	Nisan: Esther 3:7, Nehemiah 2:1
2nd	Zif	1 Kings 6:1	Iyar
3rd	Sivan	Esther 8:9	Sivan
4th	-		Tammuz
5th	-		Ab, Av

6th	-		Elul
7th	Ethanim	1 Kings 8:2	Tishri
8th	Bul	1 Kings 6:38	Heshvan
9th	Chisleu	Zechariah 7:1	Kislev
10th	Tebeth	Esther 2:16 Nehemiah 1:1	Tebeth, Tebet
11th	Sebat	Zechariah 1:7	Shebat, Shebet
12th	Adar	Esther 3:7; 8:12; 9:1 Ezra 6:15	Adar

A Time for a Year

In the Word of God there is another way of calling years, and that is the term “times”. In the story of Nebuchadnezzar we find that God communicated to the Babylonian king through a terrible dream that foretold God’s punishment for the monarch. Daniel interpreted the king’s dream, which contains the following sentence: “Let his heart be changed from man’s, and let a beast’s heart be given unto him: and let seven times pass over him” (Daniel 4:16). The prophet also declared that the dream was true and Nebuchadnezzar will be taken away from men and sent to live with the animals and eat grass (Daniel 4:25). All those things happened to this king for a period of seven years. The sentence was: “seven times shall pass over thee, till thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will” (Daniel 4:25).

Nebuchadnezzar failed to give all honour to God and when twelve months passed (Daniel 4:29) – that is a complete year - the dream came true. He was driven from among men and roamed the fields with the animals for seven years, so that his hairs grew to extreme proportions “like eagles’ feathers, and his nails like birds’ claws” (Daniel 4:33). At the end of his ordeal, the monarch gives his personal testimony, saying: “And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever...” (Daniel 4:34).

From the fact that the insane monarch’s physical appearance changed so dramatically it is evident that those seven times refer to seven literal years. Now, Daniel and John both use the terms “time” and “times” to refer to prophetic years.

A Day for a Year: 1260 Years of the Dark Ages

It has been presented that in Bible prophecy a day is equivalent to a literal year. Reiterating the topic, God ordered the people of Israel's sojourn in the wilderness as He commanded: "After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years..." (Numbers 14:34). Centuries later God declared similarly: "...Thou shalt bear the iniquity of the house of Judah forty days: I have appointed thee each day for a year" (Ezekiel 4:6). Now we will apply that formula to help us understand the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation pertaining to the 1260 year period of the Papacy's Dark Ages.

The same formula for understanding the prophetic periods by translating a day for a year will also help us know how many days are in a month and how many days are in a year according to God's calendar which stands the test even until the end of time. For the Lord Jesus did not change any part of the Law nor the Prophets. But first let us review what happened during those 1260 years of Papal domination. One writer described this horrible period of the Dark Ages as follows:

"In the sixth century the papacy had become firmly established. Its seat of power was fixed in the imperial city, and the bishop of Rome was declared to be the head over the entire church. Paganism had given place to the papacy. The dragon had given to the beast "his power, and his seat, and great authority." [REVELATION 13:2] And now began the 1260 years of papal oppression foretold in the prophecies of Daniel and the Revelation. [DANIEL 7:25; REVELATION 13:5-7.] Christians were forced to choose, either to yield their integrity and accept the papal ceremonies and worship, or to wear away their lives in dungeons or suffer death by the rack, the fagot, or the headsman's ax."

TEXT	TIME PERIOD		DESCRIPTION
Revelation 11:11	Three days and a half	3 ½ Days	The Spirit of life entered into the two witnesses
Daniel 7:25	A time, times and the dividing of time	3 ½ Times	He shall think to change <u>times</u> and laws
Daniel 12:7	A time, times and a half	3 ½ Times	To scatter the power of the holy people
Revelation 12:14	A time, times and half a time	3 ½ Times	The woman is nourished
Revelation 11:2	42 Months		The holy city shall they tread under foot
Revelation 13:5	42 Months		Power enforced for forty and two months.
Revelation 11:3	1260 Days		Two witnesses prophesy in sackcloth

Revelation 12:6	1260 Days	The woman fled into the wilderness
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“The accession of the Roman Church to power marked the beginning of the Dark Ages. As her power increased, the darkness deepened. Faith was transferred from Christ, the true foundation, to the pope of Rome. Instead of trusting in the Son of God for forgiveness of sins and for eternal salvation, the people looked to the pope, and to the priests and prelates to whom he delegated authority. They were taught that the pope was their earthly mediator, and that none could approach God except through him, and, further, that he stood in the place of God to them, and was therefore to be implicitly obeyed. A deviation from his requirements was sufficient cause for the severest punishment to be visited upon the bodies and souls of the offenders. Thus the minds of the people were turned away from God to fallible, erring, and cruel men, nay more, to the prince of darkness himself, who exercised his power through them.”

3 ½ Days Stand for 1260 Years

In Revelation 11:11 the Papal supremacy period is clearly termed as a period of three days and a half (3.5 days). Accordingly, adhering to the Word of God’s principle of understanding prophetic periods, we do the calculations in line with the Biblical command to discover the meaning of the prophecies by taking one day for a year (See Numbers 14:34; Ezekiel 4:6). But this is a special case because those three and a half days represent three and a half years of 360 days, consequently:

$$3.5 \times 360 = 1260$$

Furthermore, Revelation 11:11 speaks of those 1260 years of papal tyranny during the medieval period, and it proclaims the glorious promise that the Word of God would come back to life after the 1260 years...

Time, Times and Half a Time is 1260 Years

In three occasions the Word of God mentions the phrase “time times and half a time”. All those terms refer to the same period of 1260 years of papal supremacy. In Daniel 7:25 it is represented as a political and religious power that spoke against God and persecuted the saints and endeavored to change times and laws. The period is termed as time, times and dividing of time (Daniel 7:25; Daniel 12:7). Then in Revelation 12:14 it speaks of a time, times and half a time as the period when the woman (Church) was kept pure and free from Rome’s repression in the wilderness.

A Time

Times

Half Time (Daniel 7:25; Daniel 12:7 and Revelation 12:14)

Remember that “times” stand for years in Daniel and Revelation. Therefore a “time” is one year, “times” equals two years and “half a time” stands for half a year. Given that in the Biblical calendar a year has

360 days, those three and a half times are three and a half sets of 360 days that will add up 1260 days, which in turn stand for 1260 years of the Papacy's Dark Ages of terror.

$$\begin{array}{r} 360 + \\ 360 \\ 360 \\ \hline 180 = \\ 1260 \end{array}$$

As you can see, once again God's Word is depicting the same period of Papal repression in terms of "time, times and half a time," so "he that hath an ear, let him hear" (Revelation 2:7) because it is presenting the same Papal dominance of 1260 years from another angle.

42 Months Equivalent to 1260 Years

Whenever the Word of God reiterates a prophecy it denotes the urgency and seriousness of the matter. Speaking of the same period of time during which the Papacy acquired temporal powers and tried to silence the Word of God from prophesying and witnessing to the truth, Revelation discloses that this oppressive Papal power would continue for 42 months (Revelation 11:2). It was during those 42 prophetic months that the Papacy banned and prohibited the possession of the Old and New Testaments, threatening those who would defy their oppressive authority to suffer the penalty of a torturous death. Yet the prophet Isaiah proclaims: "the grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever" (Isaiah 40:8). The Word of God is depicted as the two witnesses that prophesied in sackcloth during that span of 1260 years (Revelation 11:3). It was also during that period of the Dark Ages that the oppressive Papal power was given a mouth "speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months" (Revelation 13:5).

Yet again God speaks in a symbolic language. Both Revelation 11:2 and Revelation 13:5 reiterate the prophecy regarding the mystery of iniquity that persecuted the Christian Church and tried to obliterate the truth and stopping it from reaching the common people.

To understand this prophecy we must rely on the Word of God calendar which only has months of 30 days. Therefore we shall multiply the 42 months by its 30 days and it will give us a result of 1260 days, which in prophecy is equivalent to those dreadful 1260 years of Papal repression.

$$42 \times 30 = 1260$$

The Prophetic Days Taken After True Biblical Calendar

Let us now notice how the following three charts help us clarify the fact that the year in Biblical times comprised a period of 360 days. The Biblical calendar remains unchanged in God's Holy and it helps us understand the prophecies about the plan of salvation. The calendar that I refer to is the same that was used by the antediluvian people, those contemporaries of Noah. This calendar must be understood by God's remnant people because it has due bearing for our comprehension of the events taking place right

in the time of the end. Therefore, the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation not only expose the Roman Papacy's kingdom of terror but also confirm that the calendar according to God should always constitute years of 360 days.

Working with the figure 3.5 will help us understand that the calendar that God intended for us to use today is the same calendar from the beginning of time. Revelation 11:9 and Revelation 11:11 unmask the Papacy's Dark Ages as 3.5 days, and in Daniel 7:25, Daniel 12:7 and Revelation 12:14 God once again reveals this era of darkness with the terms "time, times and half a time", or 3.5 times which we have seen stand for the same period of 1260 years of Papal supremacy.

For the rest of the texts that speak of the same Dark Ages and which do not speak in terms of 3.5 days, let us just do the division by either months or days and it will rightly guide us to the 3.5 figure. Thus, the 42 months of Revelation 11:2 and 13:5 divided by 12 months in a year give us the figure 3.5. Let us also consider the 1260 days of Revelation 11:3 and 12:6: dividing 1260 days by 360 days in a year gives us the same figure of 3.5.

TEXT	UNITS	By 12 months in a year
Revelation 11: 2, Revelation 13:5	42 Months	$42 \div 12 = 3.5$

TEXT	UNITS	By 360 days in a year
Revelation 11: 3; Revelation 12:6	1260 Days	$1260 \div 360 = 3.5$

Our Lord Jesus honored what the prophets had written regarding God's calendar. They had written in relation to the true calendar which comprehends months of 30 days, years of 12 months and therefore years of 360 days. The Lord Jesus did not come to destroy the Law or the Prophets which contain the true chronology and calendar. Jesus came to fulfill the Law and the Prophets. Therefore, God expects us to understand the Biblical calendar in order for us to corroborate the Bible prophecies. This calendar remains as a true guide to enlighten God's remnant church in the faith of Jesus until the very end of time. For that reason, under God's dispensation, a year is equivalent to 360 days. Therefore, by dividing 1260 days by 3.5 years we get years of 360 days. Consequently, a month contains 30 days; just divide 1260 days by 42 months = 30.

TIME UNIT	CALCULATIONS	NUMBER OF DAYS
A YEAR =	$1260 \div 3.5$	360 Days
A MONTH =	$1260 \div 42$	30 Days

1260 Years of Medieval Darkness

Although the Darkest period of the history of this world was during the 1260 year reign of the medieval Papacy, God raised great dignitaries of faith who proclaimed the Word of God and make it shine in the midst of darkness. Examples of such men of renown are: the Germans Martin Luther and Melanchthon, from Prague: John Huss and Jerome, the Swiss Ulric Zwingli, the Scot John Knox, the Englishmen: John Wycliffe, William Tyndale, Cranmer, Hugh Latimer, John and Charles Wesley, the Huguenots of France. They are such, “Of whom the world was not worthy” (Hebrews 11:38).

The Word of God Banned for 1260 years

The same Dark Ages period of 1260 years is depicted in the Word of God as 1260 days when the two witnesses prophesied in sackcloth (Revelation 11:3). This was the period when the Word of God, depicted as the two witnesses, the Old and New Testaments was proscribed under penalty of death. “During the greater part of this period, God's witnesses remained in a state of obscurity. The papal power sought to hide from the people the word of truth, and set before them false witnesses to contradict its testimony. When the Word of God was proscribed by religious and secular authority; when its testimony was perverted, and every effort made that men and demons could invent to turn the minds of the people from it; when those who dared proclaim its sacred truths were hunted, betrayed, tortured, buried in dungeon cells, martyred for their faith, or compelled to flee to mountain fastness, and to dens and caves of the earth--then the faithful witnesses prophesied in sackcloth. Yet they continued their testimony throughout the entire period of 1260 years. In the darkest times there were faithful men who loved God's word and were jealous for His honor.”

The Word of God was banned because it reveals the Papacy's schemes of deception and it reveals their span of temporal power during the Middle Ages. This period is also portrayed as the period 1260 days during which the woman flees into the wilderness. This is a reference to the Christian Church that had been persecuted during that dreadful period of the Dark Ages (Revelation 12:6).

The Inquisition and Galileo Galilei

The Papacy not only had a problem with the calendar and biblical chronology but also with scientific knowledge, especially the knowledge of the natural world that reveals what Rome tried to suppress: that “the heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork” (Psalms 19:1). The Papacy was furiously suppressing all vestiges of scientific knowledge and wanted to continue to keep the world in ignorance and superstition. Yet they could not stop God's enlightenment of great minds like Galileo Galilei who had the courage to stand for truth, even when that would cause him to be accused of heresy for daring to think differently to the Papacy. Galileo believed that the earth rotates around the sun, but the Papacy could not tolerate that teaching because their system of mind-enslavement would collapse. They needed to propagate their superstitions emanating from the erroneous belief that the earth is the center of the universe.

It was inconvenient for the Papacy to have astronomers believe that the earth is a 360° degree sphere that moves around the sun. The Papacy was not willing to acknowledge that the center of the universe is the

Heavenly Sanctuary where “God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness” (Psalms 47:8). The pope is not the king in the Kingdom of Heaven, neither is he king of the earth. As the Psalmist proclaims: “For God is the King of all the earth...” (Psalms 47:7). God did not create a flat earth, but the Papacy kept people in ignorance and fear deceived millions with such sophism. Yet the Word of God reveals that the earth is a spherical planet:

“It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in” (Isaiah 40:22).

In dreadful expectation of the papacy’s torturous death by burning alive at the stake, Galileo was forced by the Inquisition in 1633 A.D. to recant and sign with his own hand the following retraction: “I abjure, curse, and detest the error and heresy of the motion of the earth.” With indignation the preacher Chiniquy who was rescued from the Catholic clergy said about Galileo: “That learned man had to degrade himself by swearing a lie... Thus the wings of that giant eagle of Rome were clipped by the scissors of the pope. But God would not allow that giant intellect to be entirely strangled by the bloody hands of that implacable enemy of light and truth, the pope.”

God strengthened Galileo, and as he stood up from his humiliating kneeling position, he said: “Eppur si muove”, “But it moves”, meaning that his retraction was not going to prevent the earth from rotating around the sun. Yet, he was found guilty of heresy and was placed under house arrest for the rest of his life.

John Huss

John Huss was sentenced to a most horrendous death; he was burnt alive at the stake by Roman Catholic Church.

“Being again exhorted to retract, he replied, turning toward the people, "With what face, then, should I behold the heavens? How should I look on those multitudes of men to whom I have preached the pure gospel? No; I esteem their salvation more than this poor body, now appointed unto death." Finally a crown or mitre, on which were painted frightful figures of demons, and bearing the inscription, "The Arch-Heretic," was placed upon his head. "Most joyfully," he said, "will I wear this crown of shame for thy sake, O Lord Jesus, who for me didst wear a crown of thorns."

“He was now delivered up to the secular authorities, and led away to the place of execution. An immense procession followed, hundreds of men at arms, priests and bishops in their costly robes, and the inhabitants of Constance. When he had been fastened to the stake, and all was ready for the fire to be lighted, the martyr was once more exhorted to save himself by renouncing his errors. "What errors," said Huss, "shall I renounce? I know myself guilty of none. I call God to witness that all that I have written or preached has been with the view of rescuing souls from sin and perdition; and, therefore, most joyfully will I confirm with my blood that truth which I have written and preached. When the flames kindled about him, he began to sing, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me," and so continued till his voice was silenced forever.”

The Martyr Jerome

Because of his faith in the Word of God, Jerome, another faithful man was condemned, by the Catholic prelates, to be burnt alive at the stake. On the day of his execution he was pleading with God for mercy as he had previously recanted from his faith because of fear when he beheld Huss' execution. At the stake Jerome exclaimed: "Of all the sins that I have committed since my youth, none weigh so heavily upon my mind, and cause me such poignant remorse, as that which I committed in this fatal place, when I approved of the iniquitous sentence rendered against Wycliffe, and the holy martyr, John Huss, my master. Yes, I confess it from my heart; and declare with horror that I disgracefully quailed, when, through a dread of death, I condemned their doctrines. I therefore supplicate Almighty God to deign to pardon me my sins, and this one in particular, the most heinous of all." "His last words, uttered as the flames rose about him, were a prayer. "Lord, Almighty Father," he cried, "have pity on me, and pardon me my sins, for thou knowest that I have always loved thy truth." His voice ceased, but his lips continued to move in prayer."

John Wycliffe

John Wycliffe in his desire to reach out to the hungry multitudes with the Word of God, made it possible for the first copies of the Word of God to circulate in the English language as he translated it from the Latin version. However, Wycliffe's daring task was not appreciated by an enraged Papacy that was thirsty for any opponent's blood. This man of God died a natural death, leaving behind a heritage of faithfulness to the Word of God. "The papists had failed to work their will with Wycliffe during his life, and their hatred could not be satisfied while his body rested quietly in the grave. By the decree of the Council of Constance, more than forty years after his death his bones were exhumed and publicly burned, and the ashes were thrown into a neighboring brook."

William Tyndale

Englishman William Tyndale translated the Word of God in the early 16th century. The influence of his translation still remains with us today in the form of the King James Version. This later translation relied heavily upon Tyndale's work. Tyndale was burned at the stake on 6 October, 1536. The Catholic prelates condemned him to death in the flames after finding him guilty of treason against the Papacy. He was killed for having translated the Word of God from the original Hebrew and Greek into the English language. Of Tyndale it is written that he "was to complete the work of Wycliffe in giving the Word of God to his countrymen." He was "A diligent student and an earnest seeker for truth, who had received the Gospel from the Greek Testament of Erasmus. He fearlessly preached his convictions, urging that all doctrines be tested by the Scriptures. To the papist claim that the church had given the Word of God, and the church alone could explain it, Tyndale responded, "Do you know who taught the eagles to find their prey? That same God teaches his hungry children to find their Father in his Word. Far from having given us the Scriptures, it is you who have hidden them from us; it is you who burn those who teach them; and if you could, you would burn the Scriptures themselves."

Who Changed the Reading of World Chronology?

The fact that the book of Revelation presents a period of 1260 days/years in terms of years of 360 days and months of 30 days is enough evidence that God intends for us to understand the prophecies in terms of God's calendar and chronology. But a religio-political power would trample on God's Law and His chronology, as it is written:

“And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time” (Daniel 7:25).

From the creation of the world the biblical chronology is counted in an ascendant way; the years increase in number until our present day. But something happened in the past that seems to have altered God's calendar. God's chronology was altered and forced its reading into confusion. A devilish institution confused the orderly biblical chronology and began counting years from top to bottom and then from bottom to top. That alteration caused great harm to the understanding of the biblical prophecies and biblical chronology. But who was it that changed the reading of the chronology? It was the Roman Catholic Papacy that effected the change, just as it was prophesied by Daniel (Daniel 7:25).

Just like this institution persecuted the saints in the name of Christ, they also changed times and laws. But, notice what the Lord Jesus says about them: “In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Matt. 15: 9). The Papacy pretending to honor the Lord Jesus, employed the cunning of an abbot named Dionysius Exiguus to change the chronology. This abbot formulated a chart that set the basis for the papal calendar to celebrate their pseudo-Christian festival which they called Easter. Therefore, Dionysius gave the Papacy their Easter table, claiming that it was a genuine way to practice the festival on its due date.

At the outset of the Middle Ages, when the Papacy came to global dominance, with the help of Dionysius, they divided the chronology into two eras, namely: B.C. and A.D. This was allegedly to highlight the birth of Jesus so that the past, present and future history of the world should be centered around His birth. But there is a problem; the Lord Jesus' birth did not happen between the years 1 B.C. and 1 A.D. as Dionysius and the Papacy claimed. Nonetheless, historians have blindly accepted Dionysius' artificial division of time and his incorrect dating of the year of Jesus' birth even though they acknowledge that it is incorrect.

The alteration of the chronology was a conspiracy against the faith of the Lord Jesus. It was an affront, a plot against God's chronology and Bible prophecies. The Papacy's plan was to establish an uninterrupted sequence for the celebration of Easter. But it is apparent that the Papacy was not interested in maintaining the continuity of the true Judeo-Christian feast of the Passover. If the Papacy's intentions were to honor the God of the Hebrews, they would not have changed the times, that is, the Judeo-Christian calendar. If their intentions were to honor Jesus Christ, as they claimed, they would not have meddled with the calendar at all.

Medieval Chronology

It is not that the Christians had a calendar different to that of the Jews; the Judeo-Christian Church remained faithful to God's oracles as given to their Hebrew predecessors. But the time came for the sweeping compromise with paganism, as the union of the Roman Pagan religion and Christianity took place. The pagans, who retained their own traditions including their festivals and their particular calendar, enforced their traditions on the apostate Christians who were encouraged to get rid of everything Jewish. Therefore, historians have written about this miserable compromise as follows: "The Christian calendar was based, as regards its form and division, on the official (Julian) calendar of the Roman Empire, so during the earlier centuries Christians employed the eras used by their pagan countrymen." But of course historians refer to as "Christians" those who had apostatized from the true Christian faith and allowed entrance to all forms of pagan celebrations including the one celebrated on the 25th of December.

By accepting the wrong form of calendar, the apostate Medieval Church was also encouraged to accept a wrong date for the birth of Jesus, which in turn would thwart the understanding of the Old Testament prophecies regarding the Lord Jesus' divinity and the Heavenly Sanctuary doctrine. Therefore, this Papal alteration of biblical chronology clouded people's understanding of the eschatological prophecies of Jesus' ministry in the Most Holy Place of the Heavenly Sanctuary. "Dionysius... proposed that the epoch of the birth of Christ, which he assigned to Dec. 25 A.U.C. 753, should be adopted by Christians. This was called the Vulgar of Dionysian Era, and gradually gained almost general acceptance." Hastings continues: "It is well known that Dionysius was incorrect in his calculation, and that the birth of Christ should more probably be assigned to A.U.C. 749 or B.C. 4." Both Dionysius and Hastings were incorrect about the date of Jesus' birth because the Lord was born in the year 3 B.C. according to the prophecies of Daniel and the biblical chronology. But the Papacy was more cunning as they taught and continue to teach that Jesus was born 754 years after the founding of Rome cunningly placing Jesus' birth in the year 1 A.D.

You would expect that if the Papacy wanted to honor the Lord Jesus, as they claim, they would not have changed the biblical chronology. Moreover if their intention was to uphold the birth of Jesus, they would have kept Jerusalem's sacred history as a major landmark for counting the chronology of Jesus, and not the founding of a pagan city such as Rome. They conferred all honor to their cradle of paganism, ancient Rome, when they cunningly introduced the misconception that Jesus was born in the year 754 from the founding of Rome. Rome was the Papacy's landmark to begin reading world history, the cradle its anti-Christ system. Alexandria was also a capital for paganism, and the Papacy's early playground. Dionysius was the Papacy's scapegoat for the change of the biblical chronology. He supplanted God's chronology for a set of tables prepared in Alexandria. It is written: "to be sure that his own tables were correct, he simply extended a set of tables prepared in Alexandria that had circulated in the West in Latin". Therefore, the Papacy adopted, to a great extent, the philosophy of the Greeks, whose center was in Alexandria.

What was the Purpose in Changing God's Chronology?

The Papacy's changing of the biblical chronology was an act of its antichrist authority against the authority of the Lord Jesus. The changing of the calendar was merely a religious issue and it had no relation to the affairs of agriculture. It changed the calendar to procure the reestablishment of the ancient Roman Empire's worship on the day of the sun. It sought to revive its pagan liturgy of Sunday worship and stop the Christians from observing the seventh day Sabbath (Saturday) of the fourth Commandment

in the Law of God (Exodus 20:8-11). By changing the calendar the Papacy enforced the reading of history in a topsy-turvy way. To ensure that Christians were enticed to embrace Sunday, the Papacy needed to change the calendar, because by doing so it ensured that its festival of Easter would always fall on a Sunday. At the same time would emulate the feast of the Jewish Passover by holding the Easter festival around the Passover. The Easter tradition was a tool that the Papacy exploited to demonstrate its alleged power to trample upon the commandments of God. Easter is in essence its most powerful means to achieve its 'dies domini' or Sunday worship, which is the right arm of its authority. The Papacy asserts: "8. For the Christian, Sunday is above all an Easter celebration". But it should certainly clarify that Sunday worship is not for the Christian who genuinely wishes to obey God rather than the Catholic system. On the contrary, the saint who wishes to "keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus" (Revelation 14:12) will adhere to the example of Jesus who did not change the Law or the prophets (Matt. 5:17) but kept the seventh day Saturday holy. The Scripture says that the Lord Jesus, "as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read" (Luke 4:16).

One of the major changes that the Papacy made was in regard to the beginning of the year. Therefore the Papacy enticed the pseudo-Christian Church to adopt the Roman Empire's Julian calendar, not only to please imperial Rome from whom it received its authority and seat, but also to rid the Christian Church of all vestiges of its Jewish heritage. Consequently, the church was duped into accepting the beginning of the year not in the Hebrew month Abib (Nisan), but in January.

The Truth About the Passover and Easter

Jesus' disciples celebrated the feast of the Passover only once in a year, in the month Abib. On the occasion of Jesus' crucifixion they asked the Lord: "Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the Passover?" (Matt. 26:17). Jesus commanded them to prepare the Passover in a man's private house (Matt. 26:18), so "they made ready the Passover" (Matt. 26:19). Of course, for them the Passover included not only the roasted lamb and bitter herbs, but also the unleavened bread and unfermented juice of the vine, emblems that represented the body and blood of Jesus, to be kept in remembrance of Him (1 Corinthians 11:24). The Feast of Unleavened Bread was called the Passover (Luke 22:1). Paul affirmed that for the Christian Church "...Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us" (1 Corinthians 5:7). But this Passover sacrifice was offered only once, not many times as people have been led to believe. "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many" (Hebrews 9:28). Because Christ is our Passover and He was sacrificed on Friday 14th of Nisan, then those who keep Sunday would probably be better keeping Friday the day of His crucifixion instead of Sunday the day of His resurrection. But of course the Jewish Passover feast was not attached to any particular day of the week but to the 14th day of the first month. Therefore the Passover could be celebrated on any day of the week and not from Sunday to Sunday as the Papacy's Easter. As stated, the Passover feast was not attached to any particular day of the week, but the Easter celebration is intended to foster Sunday worship.

The Christian Church that wished to adhere to the statutes pertaining to the feast days would certainly have of necessity observed God's Passover on the day that the 14th of the first month fell upon and not from Sunday to Sunday as the Papacy established.

The Shortening of the Calendar in 1582

In order to advance their so called Sun worship, the Romans created their solar calendar that dated back to Julius Caesar's reigning year 45 B.C. It was he who introduced the devilish idea that years should be reckoned as having 365 days with leap years of 366 every fourth year. But the introduction of this Sun calendar was another of Satan's stratagems to counter the Judeo-Christian Feast of the Passover and to introduce into the Christian Church the pagan celebration of Easter. Remember that the Biblical Passover Feast was unmovable; that is, it always fell on the 14th of the first month no matter what day of the week it was. But the Easter celebration, on the other hand is called the wandering Easter because it was schemed to fall on any given Sunday of their "35-day span where Easter can occur (March 22- April 25, inclusive): the first Sunday after the first full moon after the spring equinox." But the Roman religion had a problem with the Judeo-Christian calendar because in order for them to entice the Christian Church into idolatry, they needed to grasp their first chance to change their festivities and their calendar. The dragon was wroth against the church and could not stand the fact that Christians were still clinging to the Jewish calendar. "Our first stop on this tour of the wandering Easter is a quick study of how calendars were used in the Biblical lands around 30 A.D. Although the Julian or solar-based calendar of the Roman Empire had been in place since 45 B.C., it did not supplant the lunar calendar that was the chart and compass of 2,000 years of Jewish history." After the Roman Emperor Constantine enforced Sunday as the only day of worship in 321 A.D. another religious convention, the council of Nicea, took place. Constantine had already displaced the sacredness of the seventh day Sabbath (Saturday) and granted all honor to the first day of the week, Sunday. But Rome still needed to crown its idolatrous achievement with a church canon to eradicate forever the sanctity of the true day of the Lord. Therefore, "one unanimously accepted canon guaranteed that Easter would never fall on the beginning of the Jewish Passover." Such a drastic change, Brown states, was "perhaps reflecting Christian animosity towards the Jewish people for their perceived role in Jesus' death." But of course it was not the animosity of the true Christian Church against the Jews. The early Christians harbored no hatred against their Jewish brothers, nor any quarrel against the Commandments of God. But the Papacy, which had received its power and authority from the dragon, had such hatred against the Christian Church and tried to alienate Christianity from its Jewish heritage of faith. Moreover, the battle was not only against the Commandments of God, but against the Lord Jesus and His authority. The sole purpose for a reformed calendar was purely ecclesiastical; it was due to the Papacy's urgency to uphold their commitment to celebrate their Easter from Sunday to Sunday. Therefore, Pope Gregory, aided by his team of idolatrous astronomers, took drastic measures by a papal Bull that imposed the shortening of the calendar by 10 numerical days. The Pope ordered in his Bull that the 4th of October be followed by the 15th of October 1582.

October 1582						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
	1	2	3	4	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

Notice that the weekly cycle was not affected by this shortening of days. The day of the Lord, the Sabbath, remained the seventh day of the week. The number of the Sabbath in the calendar was changed but the day of Lord remained unmovable, its holy time was not modified.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

CHRONOLOGY OF THE JUDGMENT: 1844 AND BEYOND

“God's people in these last days are not to choose darkness rather than light. They are to look for light, to expect light. . . . The light will continue to shine in brighter and still brighter rays, and reveal more and more distinctly the truth as it is in Jesus, that human hearts and human characters may be improved, and moral darkness--which Satan is working to bring over the people of God--may be dispelled. . . . As we near the close of time there will be needed a deeper and clearer discernment, a more firm knowledge of the Word of God, a living experience, and the holiness of heart and life which we must have to serve Him.”
Ellen White, That I May Know Him, P. 347, 1964.

Chart of the World Chronology until Judgment Time

FATHER	FATHER'S AGE	SON'S BIRTH	TEXT	WORLD YEAR (A.M.)
God Created	-	Adam	Genesis 1:26-31	1
ADAM	130 years old	Seth	Genesis 5:3	130
SETH	105 years old	Enos	Genesis 5:6	235
ENOS	90 years old	Cainan	Genesis 5:9	325
CAINAN	70 years old	Mahalaleel	Genesis 5:12	395
MAHALALEEL	65 years old	Jared	Genesis 5:15	460
JARED	162 years old	Enoch	Genesis 5:18	622
ENOCH	65 years old	Methuselah	Genesis 5:21	687
METHUSELAH	187 years old	Lamech	Genesis 5:25	874
LAMECH	182 years old	Noah	Genesis 5:28	1056
NOAH	500 years old	Shem	Genesis 5:32	1556
SHEM	100 years old	Arphaxad YEAR OF THE FLOOD	Genesis 11:9,10	1656
ARPHAXAD	35 years old	Salah	Genesis 11:12	1691

SALAH	30 years old	Eber	Genesis 11:14	1721
EBER	34 years old	Peleg	Genesis 11:16	1755
PELEG	30 years old	Reu	Genesis 11:18	1785
REU	32 years old	Serug	Genesis 11:20	1817
SERUG	30 years old	Nahor	Genesis 11:22	1847
NAHOR	29 years old	Terah	Genesis 11:24	1876
TERAH	70 years old	Abram	Genesis 11:26	1946
ABRAHAM	100 years old	Isaac	Genesis 21:5	2046
ISAAC	60 years old	Jacob	Genesis 25:26	2106
JACOB	130 years old	TO EGYPT	Genesis 47:9	2236
Israel's Slavery	430 years	THE EXODUS	Exodus 12:40-41	2666
ISRAEL	40 years	Wilderness	Acts 13:18	2706
JUDGES	450 years	Joshua to Samuel	Acts 13:20	3156
JUDGE SAMUEL & KING SAUL		Saul anointed king in year 3116 A.M.	1 Sam 25:1 1 Sam 28:3,7 1 Sam 31:4	3156
DAVID	40 years	Crowned at 30 years of age in year 3156	2 Sam 5:5	3196
SOLOMON	40 years	Crowned in year 3196 A.M.	1 Kings 11:42	3236
REHOBOAM	17 years	Crowned at 41 years of age in year 3236 A.M.	1 Kings 14:21	3253
ABIJAM (Abijah)	3 years	Crowned in year 3253 A.M.	1 Kings 15:2	3256
ASA	41 years	Crowned in year 3256 A.M.	1 Kings 15:9,10	3297
JEHOSHAPHAT	25 years	Crowned at 35 years of age in year 3297 A.M.	1 Kings 22:41,42	3322
JEHORAM	8 years	Crowned at 32 years of age in year 3322 A.M.	2 Kings 8:17	3330

AHAZIAH	1 year	Crowned at 42 years of age in year 3330 A.M.	2 Kings 8:24,26	3331
ATHALIA (Queen)	6 years	Crowned in year 3331	2 Chronicles 22:12	3337
JEHOASH (Joash)	40 years	Crowned at 7 years of age in year 3337 A.M.	2 Kings 12:1	3377
AMAZIAH	29 years	Crowned at 25 years of age in year 3377 A.M.	2 Kings 14:1-2	3406
UZZIAH (Azariah)	52 years	Crowned at 16 years of age in year 3406	2 Chronicles 26:3	3458
JOTHAM	16 years	Crowned at 25 years of age in year 3458 A.M.	2 Kings 15:32-33	3474
AHAZ	16 years	Crowned at 20 years of age in year 3474 A.M.	2 Kings 16:1-2	3490
HEZEKIAH	29 years	Crowned at 25 years of age in year 3490 A.M.	2 Kings 18:2	3519
MANASSEH	55 years	Crowned at 12 years of age in year 3519	2 Kings 21:1	3574
AMON	2 years	Crowned at 22 years of age in year 3574 A.M.	2 Kings 21:19	3576
JOSIAH	31 years	Crowned at 8 years of age in year 3576	2 Kings 22:1	3607
JEHOAHAZ	3 months	Crowned at 23 years of age in year 3607	2 Kings 23:31	3607
JEHOIAKIM	4TH Year	1st BABYLONIAN INCURSION	Jeremiah 25:1	3612
JEHOIAKIM Crowned in 3607	11 years	2nd BABYLONIAN	2 Kings 23:36	3618

		INCURSION	2 Chronicles 36:5	
JEHOIACHIN	3 months	Crowned at 8 years of age in year 3619	2 Chronicles 36:9	3619
ZEDEKIAH (Mattaniah)	11 years	Crowned at 21 years of age in 3619 A.M. Taken captive in 3630 A.M.	2 Kings 24:17-18	3630
Nebuchadnezzar TEMPLE BURNT	19th year	3rd BABYLONIAN INCURSION	Jeremiah 52:12	3630
Decree to Restore and Build Jerusalem	70 years	End of 70 Year Desolation	Ezra 1:1 2 Chronicles 36:21-22	3700
TEMPLE REBUILT	49 years		Ezra 6:15	3749
JESUS' BIRTH		MESSIAH		4153 = 3 B.C.
BAPTISM OF JESUS	483 (69×7)	ANOINTED	Daniel 9:25	4183 = 27 A.D.
THE LORD'S CRUCIFIXION	3.5 years	LAMB OF GOD SACRIFICED	Daniel 9:26-27	4187 = 31 A.D.
GOD'S GRACE FOR THE JEWS	490 years	70×7	Daniel 9:24	4190 = 34 A.D.
TEMPLE DESTROYED		By the Romans		4226 = 70 A.D.
JUDGMENT IN THE HEAVENLY SANCTUARY		THE TIME OF THE END	Daniel 8:14	6000 = 1844 A.D.
THE PRESENT				6179 = 2023 A.D.

God's Heavenly Sanctuary Judgment

The prophecy of Daniel 8:14 about the 2300 years reached to the time of the end (Daniel 8: 17). It began in Daniel's time and it was fulfilled in the chronological year 6000 (1844 A.D.). This prophecy has a

symbolic language reminiscent of the Day of Atonement and therefore of judgment. Notice: “And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed” Daniel 8:14.

When the Hebrews celebrated the Day of Atonement, God commanded them to afflict their souls (Leviticus 16:31). This was a day of judgment, therefore the Israelites needed to show humility and reverence. Moreover, it was a day of cleansing or remission of sins from the repentant. Notice: “For on that day shall the priest make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, that ye may be clean from all your sins before the LORD” (Leviticus 16:30).

Only the anointed high priest could make the atonement (Leviticus 16:32). Moreover, God commanded the high priest to make atonement not just for the sinner but also for the holy sanctuary, for the tabernacle of the congregation, for the altar, for the priests and for the people (Leviticus 16:33).

The book of Daniel, whose author’s name means ‘God is my judge’, is about God’s judgment. The God of Heaven (Daniel 2:19) is the only Judge Who can change the times (Daniel 2:21), He removes kings and sets up kings (Daniel 2:21). Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon praised God as King of Heaven and acknowledged that His ways are judgment (Daniel 4:37).

The prophecy of Daniel 8:14 is the climax of God’s judgment. It is a judgment that would sit after the 1260 years of the Papacy’s dominion (Daniel 7:25). That is the reason why Daniel was told: “...Understand, O son of man: for at the time of the end shall be the vision” (Daniel 8:17). Therefore, to Daniel it was reiterated that all these things would be finished after the period of 1260 years for it says that “it shall be for a time, times and an half...” (Daniel 12:7). And once again to Daniel it is told: “...Go thy way Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end” (Daniel 14:9).

Notice how the Word of God explains that the Judgment would begin after the 1260 years of Papal supremacy:

“And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time. But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end” (Daniel 7:25-26).

God’s judgment in the Heavenly Sanctuary was to be preceded by the world history of successive world empires leading to the time of the end. The Word of God represents these empires as beasts. “These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, which shall arise out of the earth” (Daniel 7:17). Therefore, in prophecy, Babylon is represented as a lion (Daniel 7:4); Medo-Persia, as a bear (Daniel 7:5); Greece, as a leopard (Daniel 7:6); Rome, the fourth beast dreadful and terrible (Daniel 7:7); and the Papacy, as the little horn (Daniel 7:8) with “a mouth speaking great things” (Daniel 7:8).

When the chronology of the world would reach the time of the end, God would take the dominion from all these world powers. Daniel’s vision further corroborates this: “I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit...” (Daniel 7:9) “...the judgment was set and the books were open.” (Daniel 7:10). Then, “...one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days...” (Daniel 7:13). About this judgment the Son of man said: “For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son” (John 5:22).

Like chapter 7, chapter 8 of Daniel is a recapitulation of the Heavenly Sanctuary Judgment, which is preceded by the world empires and by the Papacy. Daniel received another vision of a ram with two horns (Daniel 8:3 the two kings of Media and Persia Daniel 8: 20) and a male goat with a notable horn (Daniel 8:5, the king of Greece Daniel 8:21). The goat smote the ram, and broke his two horns (Daniel 8:7). When the goat was very strong, the great horn was broken; and it came for notable ones (Daniel 8:8). “And out of one of them came forth a little horn” (Daniel 8:9).

The Papacy represented by the little horn of Daniel 8:9 is the beast of Revelation 13:5 who had “a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months” (Revelation 13:5). Notice how the little horn “magnified himself even to the prince of the host, and by him the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down” (Daniel 8:11). This is further explained in Revelation: “And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven” (Revelation 13:6).

Prior to the beginning of Judgment in the Most Holy Place in Heaven, the Papacy obliterated from the minds of people the truth, “it cast down the truth to the ground” (Daniel 8:12). The Papacy also erased the Sanctuary doctrine from people’s minds, “the place of the sanctuary was cast down” (Daniel 8: 11).

Under these circumstances of the Papacy’s eradication of God’s Sanctuary doctrine, a saint exclaimed: “...How long shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot?” (Daniel 8:13). Then the answer was given:

“And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed” (Daniel 8:14).

Once again the Word of God reiterates that “...the vision of the evening and the morning which was told is true: wherefore shut thou up the vision; for it shall be for many days” (Daniel 8:26). But this little horn “shall destroy the mighty and the holy people” (Daniel 8:24). Moreover, the angel said to Daniel “...I will make thee know what shall be in the last end of the indignation: for at the time appointed the end shall be” (Daniel 8:19).

Daniel’s Vision Reaches Time of the End in Year 6000 A.M. (1844 A.D.)

The vision of Daniel 8:14 about the 2300 years reached the chronological year 6000 (1844 A.D.). But to confirm that date you need to know when the vision would begin to be counted. Therefore, the angel told Daniel that the starting date was “from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem...” (Daniel 9:25); that is, the chronological year 3700 when the Persian King Cyrus issued that decree.

God ordained that this knowledge be written in a symbolic way so that God’s plan might not be hindered. Not even Satan could decipher the meaning of this chiastic Bible verse.

Daniel 9:25 is a chiasm because the verse is written in the form that God’s people will be able to match the whole truth, matching fact with fact as in a test. The prophet crosses two tracks in the form of a letter x. So that in one end you have the rebuilding of Jerusalem, then, in the middle you have the coming of the Messiah and on the other end you have the rebuilding of Jerusalem with its street and wall. Now 7 weeks

and 62 weeks make up a total of 69 weeks until the coming of the Messiah. The first seven weeks were to build and restore Jerusalem which makes up a total of 49 years. By adding $7+62 = 69$ weeks, then we multiply $69 \times 7 = 483$ days, this is equivalent to 483 years.

The Church's Great Disappointment in the Year 6000 A.M.

John the Revelator was shown the events to take place at the time of the fulfillment of the prophecy of Daniel 8:14. He understood that God's remnant people would undergo a heartfelt disappointment; a sweet bitter experience (Revelation 10:10). However, John was commanded to choose his words carefully so as not to reveal every detail of the vision, which to Daniel was sealed but to John it was "a little book open" (Revelation 10:2). John wrote:

"And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not" Revelation 10:4.

The message was given in a form that only the end-time people of God would be able to decipher but they would experience a bitter disappointment first. The vision was about the Heavenly Sanctuary and the ministration of the Lord Jesus. It is a vision of God's throne: "...a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire" (Revelation 10:1). Moreover, it was God Who "cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth" (Revelation 10:3). Therefore, it was God Who would guide His people through their bitter Disappointment of 1844. God also commanded His remnant people to "prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings" (Revelation 10:11) With renewed strength they take the message of the pre-advent judgment to the whole world. In that context, notice what the prophet Amos wrote:

"Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets. The lion hath roared, who will not fear? The Lord GOD hath spoken, who can but prophesy?" (Amos 3: 7-8).

The message of the seven thunders was given in an encrypted form; in the form of an ellipsis that only God's children would be able to understand; that is, the Revelator omitted some words from the message. It was written like an acronym where the reader must fill in the spaces. Notice that the angel "set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth" (Revelation 10:2). The meaning of this scenario in Rev. 10:2 is that the message would have a worldwide coverage. The fact that the angel, figuratively spoken of in this chapter, "swear by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven... and the earth... and the sea" (Revelation 10:6) indicates that it is God Himself speaking, as God only can swear by Himself. And what He swore is "that there should be time no longer" (Revelation 10:6). Here the Lord Jesus is explaining that after the fulfillment of the prophecy of Daniel 8:14, the Christian Church should not expect another time prophecy. He adds:

"But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets" (Revelation 10:7).

Habakkuk was told to "Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it" (Habakkuk 2:2). The message was clear, but God's people failed to understand it. Habakkuk wrote:

“For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry” Habakkuk 2:3.

The vision did not lie, but the church did not understand it and this caused them bitter disappointment. John was commanded to “Go and take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel” (Revelation 10:8). John said to the angel: “Give me the little book” (Revelation 10:9), and the angel said to John: “Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey” (Revelation 10:9).

The little book was the vision of Daniel 8:14 that was sweet in the mouths of God’s people proclaiming the coming of the Lord Jesus in 1844 A.D. Jeremiah wrote in another context: “Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts” (Jeremiah 15:16).

John continued to elaborate on the vision: “And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter” (Revelation 10:10). Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit Paul wrote:

“Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draws back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him” Hebrews 10:35-38.

The Word of God made it clear that at the time of the end when the mystery of God should be finished, and when the time prophecy of 2300 years should be fulfilled, God’s people would suffer a bitter disappointment. But what was it about? You ask. Well the vision was fulfilled right when the chronological clock arrived at the year 6000. A glorious event took place in the Heavenly Sanctuary, the Judgment in Heaven began. But the people overlooked what the Scriptures had to say about the fulfillment of this prophecy. In that year, Jesus did not return to earth as it was hoped but He moved from the Holy Place to the Most Holy Place in the Heavenly Sanctuary. The Holy Spirit gave testimony of this in Hebrews 9:7-8, as well as in Hebrews 10:

“Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh” (Hebrews 10:19-20).

But God’s people had previously misunderstood what the vision of Daniel 8:14 really meant. What happened is that the Adventist believers proclaimed the Second Advent of Jesus to be fulfilled in 1843-1844 A.D. For them that proclamation was sweet in their mouths, because they felt certain that our Lord would return then. But they were bitterly disappointed when the Lord did not return to earth on the date when the prophecy of Daniel 8:14 was fulfilled. The prophecy of 2300 years was fulfilled in 1844 A.D. The Adventist believers had the correct date, but they had misunderstood the event taking place in the Heavenly Sanctuary.

The Adventist believers went through a similar disappointment to that which the disciples of the Lord Jesus experienced. We are sometimes disappointed because we let ourselves to be carried away by our emotions and not by sound reasoning. We expect things to happen the way we think they should and not as it is written in the Word of God. To His disciples the Lord had said beforehand:

“Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on: And they shall scourge him, and put him to death: and the third day he shall rise again” (Luke 18: 31-33).

The prophets had written extensively about the sacrifice of our Redeemer, but of the disciples it is written that “they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken” (Luke 18:34). When the two disappointed travelers heading to Emmaus were joined on their way by our risen Savior, they intended to teach the Lord about the events that had happened in Jerusalem concerning the Lord’s crucifixion. They expressed their grief as follows: “the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him” (Luke 24:20). Then they added: “But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel...” (Luke 24:21). These men and the other disciples had a misconception about the Messiah because they had not understood the prophecies.

Likewise, the Adventist believers had tasted a palatable message and they proclaimed the sweet promise of Jesus’ glorious return. It was sweet at first, but it turned bitter when they realized that that which they had eaten was not what they expected. Yet the Lord did not abandon them in disappointment, He encouraged them to search the Scriptures and resume their mission:

“And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings” (Revelation 10:11).

Notice that they must preach again proclaiming the glorious intercession of our Lord Jesus Who intercedes for us in the Most Holy Place of the Heavenly Sanctuary. This is the “everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people” (Revelation 14:6). It proclaims the truth that “Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation” (Hebrews 9:28). Our proclamation must be that judgment has begun in the Most Holy, where our Lord Jesus, since 1844 A.D. intercedes for us in the final phase of the atonement that is taking place in the Heavenly Sanctuary. Such prophesying or preaching indicates a decisive and active allegiance to our King of kings. Therefore, we must continue to prophesy again by preaching the everlasting gospel, as it is written:

“Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters” (Revelation 14:7).

The Parable of the Ten Virgins and the Talents

The 1844 disappointment was also prefigured in the parable of the ten virgins in Matthew 25:1-13. The ten virgins represent the Advent people who waited for the coming of the Lord Jesus. When the midnight cry (Matthew 25:6) was made only five of them remained steadfast to God’s Word, as they professed the righteousness by faith of Romans 1:17.

The parable of the talents in Matthew 25: 14-30 complements the parable of the Ten Virgins. The Lord Jesus is represented in both parables as delaying His coming. In Matthew 25:5 “the bridegroom tarried” while in Matthew 25:19 “After a long time the Lord of those servants cometh.” The 5 wise virgins share the character of the faithful servant who received 5 talents, while the 5 foolish virgins have the character of the wicked and slothful servant (Matthew 25:25-26). Thus, God’s people of the time of the end are represented in both parables.

The 5 foolish virgins were negligent, they had lamps but they did not take oil with them (Matthew 25:3), while the last servant received one talent but he chose to dig in the earth and bury it (Matthew 25:18). About the last servant the Lord said: “For unto everyone that hath shall it be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath” (Matthew 25: 29). Likewise the advent people who expected the fulfillment of prophecy in 1844, but had not made a profession of righteousness by faith, rejected the message of the coming of the Lord. They buried their talent because they were unprofitable servants and were cast into outer darkness (Matthew 25:30). However, the Advent people who waited for the coming of the Lord Jesus in 1844, and whose faith did not waiver, their faith was increased as they searched the Scriptures. These wise virgins kept constant in prayer and the Lord Jesus gave them five magnifying talents which are the pillars of the Seventh-day Adventist fundamental faith. Namely: The nature of Christ, the sanctuary service, the spirit of prophecy, the three angels’ messages, and the state of the dead.

The Earth is Not the Sanctuary of Daniel 8:14

The prophet wrote: “And he said unto me, unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed” (Daniel 8:14).

If a Jew were asked this question: What happened on the Day of Atonement? The correct answer would be: On that day the sanctuary was cleansed. But, how was it cleansed? Well, it was cleansed by offering the blood of the sacrifice. Now, put Daniel 8:14 into context; the vision is a time prophecy, but it has to do with language of the Day of Atonement, the cleansing of the sanctuary. So the question then arises, what sanctuary is Daniel prophesying about?

Daniel 8:14 cannot be referring to the cleansing of the Jewish temple because it was destroyed by the Romans in the year 70 A.D. Moreover, the vision is for the time of the end (Daniel 8:17). It cannot be the earth because this is purely atonement language, and atonement only happened around the sanctuary. Let the Word of God give the explanation. The Scriptures say:

“And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission” (Hebrews 9:22).

The atonement always required a sacrifice. Where there is no sacrifice, there is no cleansing and no remission of sins. Therefore, the vision of Daniel 8:14 refers to the Heavenly Sanctuary and specifically to its Most Holy Place. Let the Holy Scriptures continue the explanation:

“It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these” (Hebrews 9:23).

I beg your pardon, Lord, please refresh my mind... when would be the fulfillment of the vision? “Understand, O son of man: for at the time of the end shall be the vision” (Daniel 8:17). Praise the Lord! The book of Hebrews clarifies it even further: “...now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself” (Hebrews 9:26).

Remember that on the Day of Atonement, the atonement for the sanctuary was not made until the high priest had come out of the sanctuary’s Most Holy Place (Leviticus 16:20). So the final phase of the atonement is taking place in Heaven. But soon the atonement will be forever finished, as the Holy Scriptures confirm: “So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation” (Hebrews 9:28).

Explaining the Disappointment

The bitter disappointment for the faithful Adventist believers of all denominations took place in the United States of America. William Miller, a lay preacher of the Baptist Church, moved by the Holy Spirit, began to preach about the fulfillment of the prophecy in Daniel 8:14, which, he mistook to mean the Second Coming of Jesus in 1844 A.D. Although Miller was correct about the date of the vision’s fulfillment, he had misunderstood the whole event that was taking place. “In explaining Daniel 8:14, “Unto two thousand and three hundred days, then shall the sanctuary be cleansed,” Miller, as has been stated, adopted the generally received view that the earth is the sanctuary, and he believed that the cleansing of the sanctuary represented the purification of the earth by fire at the coming of the Lord. When, therefore, he found that the close of the 2300 days was definitely foretold, he concluded that this revealed the time of the Second Advent. His error resulted from accepting the popular view as to what constitutes the sanctuary.”

The young Methodist teenager Ellen G. White also attended Miller’s Adventist prophecy lectures in 1842 A.D. She later received from God the ministry of prophecy and became one of the pioneers of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Some years later she wrote:

“What emotions filled my heart as I stood before the people of my native city. It was here that I received my first impressions in regard to the speedy, personal coming of our Lord. Here my father's family, including myself, were excluded from the Methodist Church for cherishing this blessed hope. I knew there were none in the congregation who had been active workers in the message of the first and second angels. And yet this city was favored with special light and privileges in the great movement of 1842-4. A large company accepted the faith, and rejoiced in the glad tidings that Jesus was soon coming. Many more would have taken their position with the waiting, watching ones, had not the ministers warned them against attending the Adventist meetings, telling them that it was as great a sin to listen to these doctrines as to attend a theater.”

Sister Ellen White was also one of those who experienced the bitter disappointment of 1844 A.D. She was also ridiculed by her former brothers and sisters of the Methodist denomination. But like the great men and women of faith, she persisted in the faith of the Lord. She explained the necessity of that bitter trial as follows:

“... Miller and his associates fulfilled prophecy, and gave a message which inspiration had foretold should be given to the world, but which they could not have given had they fully understood the prophecies pointing out their disappointment, and presenting another message to be preached to all nations before the Lord should come. The first and second angels' messages were given at the right time, and accomplished the work which God designed to accomplish by them.”

The Midnight Cry Vision

After proclaiming the midnight cry message in 1844 A.D., and having experienced the bitter disappointment that followed, Ellen White received her first vision to encourage the faithful believers. Remember that it was the Lord Jesus who guided them through the bitter experience of the little book (Revelation 10: 1-6). Read part of Ellen's first vision:

“While I was praying at the family altar, the Holy Ghost fell upon me, and I seemed to be rising higher and higher, far above the dark world. I turned to look for the Advent people in the world, but could not find them, when a voice said to me, "Look again, and look a little higher." At this I raised my eyes, and saw a straight and narrow path, cast up high above the world. On this path the Advent people were traveling to the city, which was at the farther end of the path. They had a bright light set up behind them at the beginning of the path, which an angel told me was the midnight cry. This light shone all along the path and gave light for their feet so that they might not stumble. If they kept their eyes fixed on Jesus, who was just before them, leading them to the city, they were safe. But soon some grew weary, and said the city was a great way off, and they expected to have entered it before. Then Jesus would encourage them by raising His glorious right arm, and from His arm came a light which waved over the Advent band, and they shouted, "Alleluia!" Others rashly denied the light behind them and said that it was not God that had led them out so far. The light behind them went out, leaving their feet in perfect darkness, and they stumbled and lost sight of the mark and of Jesus, and fell off the path down into the dark and wicked world below...”

As the Lord Jesus mediates for us in the Heavenly Sanctuary we are encouraged to remain faithful to God's guidance. Four and a half years after the Lord Jesus began His intercessory ministry in the Most Holy Place, Ellen White explained how the Holy Spirit reaffirmed them in this doctrine. She wrote:

“Sabbath, March 24, 1849, we had a sweet and very interesting meeting with the brethren at Topsham, Maine. The Holy Ghost was poured out upon us, and I was taken off in the Spirit to the city of the living God. Then I was shown that the commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ relating to the shut door could not be separated, and that the time for the commandments of God to shine out with all their importance, and for God's people to be tried on the Sabbath truth, was when the door was opened in the Most Holy Place in the Heavenly Sanctuary, where the ark is, in which are contained the ten commandments. This door was not opened until the mediation of Jesus was finished in the Holy Place of the sanctuary in 1844. Then Jesus rose up and shut the door of the Holy Place, and opened the door into the most holy, and passed within the second veil, where He now stands by the ark, and where the faith of Israel now reaches”

We are commanded to keep the pillars of our faith. Our firm foundation will be preserved until the end of time. Please continue reading Ellen G. White's instruction:

“I am instructed to say to those who endeavor to tear down the foundation that has made us Seventh-day Adventists: We are God's commandment keeping people. For the past fifty years every phase of heresy has been brought to bear upon us, to becloud our minds regarding the teaching of the Word--especially concerning the ministration of Christ in the Heavenly Sanctuary...But the waymarks which have made us what we are, are to be preserved, and they will be preserved, as God has signified through His word and the testimonies of His Spirit. He calls upon us to hold firmly with the grip of faith, to the fundamental principles that are based upon unquestionable authority”

In recent years there have been many false teachers who have prevaricated from the Christian faith, denying the roles of our Lord Jesus in the Heavenly Sanctuary. About them the following words are written:

“The enemies of the present truth have been trying to open the door of the Holy Place, that Jesus has shut, and to close the door of the Most Holy Place, which He opened in 1844, where the ark is, containing the two tables of stone on which are written the Ten Commandments by the finger of Jehovah.”

Satan is trying to destroy the pillars of our faith and keep people's minds in ignorance regarding the Biblical foundations. But as he is unable to deceive the elect of God he becomes infuriated and wages a physical war against them. Revelation 12:17 says that he “went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ”.

The following quote is part of a vision that Ellen White had, regarding the cunning schemes of Satan, she wrote:

“As the people of God approach the perils of the last days, Satan holds earnest consultation with his angels as to the most successful plan of overthrowing their faith. Says the great deceiver... "We must watch those who are calling the attention of the people to the Sabbath of Jehovah; they will lead many to see the claims of the law of God; and the same light which reveals the true Sabbath, reveals also the ministration of Christ in the Heavenly Sanctuary, and shows that the last work for man's salvation is now going forward. Hold the minds of the people in darkness till that work is ended, and we shall secure the world and the church also...”

A Mistake in the Charts

The majority of the Adventist believers gave up on prophecy altogether and went back to their former denominations. For a very small minority, however, their faith did not waver. This small remnant persisted in their resolute belief that the Lord Jesus was coming soon after the end of the 2300 years of Daniel 8:14. They did not give up hope because the Holy Spirit had given them so much light in regards to the Spirit of Prophecy. They gained greater understanding of the mysteries of God. Yet, it was under God's providence that they should undergo a sweet/bitter spiritual experience, so that it should also be fulfilled that the “just shall live by faith” (Hebrews 10:38). They experienced a purification of their hearts, as gold refined in the fire. Their disappointment produced a refinement of their perfect love for our Redeemer. Bear in mind that God reveals His secrets when it is pertinent for us to understand these aspects of His providential plan of salvation. As the Scriptures inform us: “The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever, that

we may do all the words of this law.” (Deuteronomy 29:29). The point, once again, is that God wishes to develop our faith, and this faith is translated into a genuine love for God which leads His people to obey His Commandments. Therefore, God’s wisdom directed their understanding of the Scriptures as God deemed it suitable. Ellen G. White explains:

“...I have seen that the 1843 chart was directed by the hand of the Lord, and that it should not be altered; that the figures were as He wanted them; that His hand was over and hid a mistake in some of the figures, so that none could see it, until His hand was removed.”

The mistake in the figures was a kind reminder from heaven that God’s children should live by faith under all circumstances. Bear in mind that those Adventists had not been through their bitterest disappointment yet. But after that earlier disappointment, they regained their zeal to search the Scriptures:

“Again they were led to their Bibles to search the prophetic periods. The hand of the Lord was removed from the figures, and the mistake was explained. They saw that the prophetic periods reached to 1844, and that the same evidence which they had presented to show that the prophetic periods closed in 1843, proved that they would terminate in 1844. Light from the Word of God shone upon their position, and they discovered a tarrying time...”

The Significance of the Date 456 B.C.

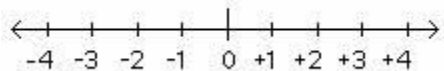
It has been an amazing experience to discover that the chronological year 6000 is the equivalent to the year 1844 A.D. We have learned that in that year, the Judgment began in the Heavenly Sanctuary. The Lord Jesus began what is called the Investigative Judgment in the Most Holy Place. It has been also exciting to learn that in the beginning of the year 456 B.C., immediately after the end of the descending year 457 B.C., the prophecy of Daniel 8:14 pertaining to the prophetic span of 2300 years began its count. The timing was perfect; the prophecy was fulfilled in 1844 A.D. But perhaps the reader wishes to know what exactly happened with the computation because it leads us to the exact date of the prophecy’s fulfillment with its starting year 456 B.C. rather than 457 B.C. Ellen G. White elucidates the facts:

“It was not at first perceived that if the decree did not go forth at the beginning of the year 457 B.C., the 2300 years would not be completed at the close of 1843. But it was ascertained that the decree was given near the close of the year 457 B.C., and therefore the prophetic period must reach to the fall of the year 1844.”

Remember that every Passover occurred in the beginning of every year, in the first month on the 14th day of the month. Many great events in Bible prophecy happened at the beginning of the year. The deliverance of the people of Israel from Egypt happened at the beginning of the year; thus, at the Exodus when the Lord commanded Moses to write down that date, it was the beginning of the year (Exodus 12:2). The Lord Jesus was crucified in the beginning of the year at the time of the Passover. Thus it is written: “Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father...” (John 13:1).

The author was ten years of age when he heard a sermon titled: “The Midnight Cry and the Great Disappointment of 1844.” In the sermon it was explained that the Adventist disappointment was due to an

error in the counting of the calendar years that the Advent movement had failed to count the year zero in the current Gregorian calendar. The preacher stated that because the year zero was missing from the calendar, it was wrongly understood that the year 1843 A.D. would be the date of the prophecy's fulfillment, and the misunderstanding could be corrected by adding the year zero. The preacher also explained that this reasoning helped the Adventist believers to arrive at the correct date of 1844. Remember that Satan had confused the chronology by introducing a system of arithmetical regression and progression to count years from top to bottom and then from bottom to top as in the following diagram:



But if you wish to understand the prophecy of Daniel 8:14 by relying solely on the Papacy's chronology you will not be able to correctly understand why 1844 A. D. is the correct date for its fulfillment. Consequently, if you follow the arithmetical progression of counting decrescendo numerical years, reaching year zero, and then counting years in a crescendo numerical way, you will find that the calculation for the prophetic dates would oscillate and increase by one or two years. For instance, supposing that the year 457 B.C. was the correct date for counting the Messianic prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27 and you add the years up to 34 A.D. it will give you a period of 491 years and if on top of that you add the supposed year zero you get a total number of 492 years. Thus every prophetic date would increase by one if not by two years. For instance: $-457+490 = 33$

The biblical chronology and its wonderful prophecies confirm the fact that the chronological year 3700 (456 B.C.) is the actual year when the 'going forth' of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem was decreed. The year 456 B.C. was used to count the years until the cleansing of the Heavenly Sanctuary in the chronological year 6000 (1844 A.D.).

A 6179 Year Old Conspiracy Against God

The war that happened in Heaven was waged on the issue of worship. It was a war between good and evil, between the Creator Jesus Christ, in Whom "God hath given to us eternal life" (1 John 5:11), and Satan who "was a murderer from the beginning" (John 8:44). It was a war between God Who is light, in Whom there is no darkness at all (1 John 1:5) and "the rulers of the darkness of this world..." (Ephesians 6:12). This conflict has continued on this earth for over six thousand years and we are yet to undergo our worst battle as the end of the world approaches. The final conflict will also revolve around the issue of worship: either you worship God and keep His Commandments or you worship Satan and follow the commandments of men.

When Cain murdered his brother Abel, he did it because of his hatred against the righteous Abel of whom God accepted worship (Genesis 4:5, 6). The construction of the tower of Babel was due to a confederacy of the earth in rebellion against God. It was an issue of worship; they wanted a tower "whose top may reach unto heaven" (Genesis 11:4). The split in the kingdom of Israel was also an issue of power, control and worship to subjugate the ten tribes led by Jeroboam. This division led to the establishment of two altars to Baal (1 Kings 12:28). The Lord Jesus was crucified because of the issue of worship. The earth and the universe have witnessed a horrendous hatred and crimes against the people of God throughout the

history of this world. It is shocking to know that those atrocities were carried out under the name of worship. To the religious leaders of Jerusalem the Lord Jesus said:

“Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar” (Matt. 23:34-35).

The following righteous people hoped for God’s promise of redemption. They “all died in faith... and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth” (Hebrews 11:13): Abel (Hebrews 11:4), Noah (Hebrews 11:7), Abraham (Hebrews 11:8), Sara (Hebrews 11:11), Isaac (Hebrews 11:20), Jacob (Hebrews 11:21), Moses (Hebrews 11:23), Rahab (Hebrews 11:31), Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the prophets (Hebrews 11:32). Moreover, others were tortured (Hebrews 11:35), stoned, sawn in half, slain with the sword, dressed in sheepskins and tormented (Hebrews 11:37). And in the Christian Era people who believed that the righteous must live by faith such as the great Reformer Martin Luther, Jerome, John Huss, William Tyndale, and the more than one hundred million people who were tortured and killed for their faith during the 1260 year reign of spiritual darkness. More could be said every unknown servant of the Lord who sleeps in the Lord until judgment day. The blood of the martyrs “who were slain for the word of God” (Revelation 6:9) metaphorically cries with a loud voice: “How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?” (Revelation 6:10). The Almighty God is soon to fulfill His promise written a long time ago:

“O thou enemy, destructions are come to a perpetual end: and thou hast destroyed cities; their memorial is perished with them. But the LORD shall endure forever: he hath prepared his throne for judgment. And he shall judge the world in righteousness; he shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness. The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble” (Psalms 9: 6-9).

Reader, if you follow the religion of Judaism, or Christianity, or Islamism, or Buddhism, or Hinduism or any other religion, remember that Almighty God loves you, as it is written in God’s Word:

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

But do not find yourself fighting against God the Creator. Too much innocent blood has been shed because of religious hatred against the Commandments of God. Remember, that the day God has reserved for us to worship Him is the seventh day of the week: Saturday. This is the Sabbath that our Creator God blessed and sanctified (Genesis 2:2). It is not the sixth day of the week, Friday, nor the first day of the week, Sunday. Remember Noah, Daniel and Job; they all kept the seventh day Sabbath holy.

The day is coming when God’s final judgment upon the wickedness of the world will be declared. God has not forgotten the earth. He will end the misery of this world

The chronology of the mysteries of God is coming to an end. But it will not be over without a final conflict between good and evil. The Scriptures affirm that the final conflict will test the character of each individual in the whole world. Therefore: “Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord GOD” (Ezekiel 14:14).

Let the whole world know that our Creator gave His life for us: “He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not” (John 1:10). David prophesied of our Lord in the Psalms: “For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet” (Psalms 22:16).

The Word of God depicts the current world condition as “the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified” (Revelation 11:8). The Lord Jesus is crucified in a spiritual sense by the system identified as the mystery of iniquity. The Eucharist is one example of the idolatrous worship adopted from Egypt; the Papacy do not deny it that it is a repetition of the crucifixion of Jesus. Likewise, spiritual Sodom is a depiction of the apostate nations who cover up the man of sin, who “were once made partakers of the Holy Ghost” (Hebrews 6:4), for whom “it is impossible” “If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame” (Hebrews 6:4, 6). The day of our Redeemer’s return is approaching, but “that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition” (2 Thessalonians 2:3).

Our Redeemer has an appointment with our world; His promise of His glorious return will be fulfilled soon. “And it shall be said in that day, lo this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us...” (Isaiah 25:9). “Behold, he cometh with the clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they that pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen” (Revelation 1:7).

SECTION TWO: HISTORY, SCIENCE AND THE ORIGIN OF LIFE

CHAPTER TWENTY- THREE

THE ORIGIN OF LIFE

Introduction

Have you ever looked up at the night sky and wondered how the vast expanse of the universe with its countless stars and galaxies came into existence. How do you explain the incredible diversity of plants and animals that fill our habitable planet? How old is the earth, and how can we know for sure. Moreover, how do you explain the origin of humankind and the beautifully diverse ethnic groups? Put simply; where did everything come from?

For centuries, we have struggled to understand where we came from. Many theories have been proposed; some rational and thought provoking, others wildly speculative and seemingly impossible to verify. So how do we sort through all of these theories to determine which one is the most logical? Modern science is revealing important clues to this puzzle, helping us to better understand the full picture of our origin. However, the mystery still remains; where did everything come from?

The standard answer offered is the Big Bang explanation for the origin of the universe and the evolutionary theory for the origin of the species. This means, whether it was the formation of the universe, the first life forms, or people, the answer is the same. It was all the result of blind natural processes acting on matter and energy over many millions and even billions of years. As stated by National Geographic magazine, “it all began in chaos.” In other words the universe and everything in it, including you and me are nothing more than the sum total of a series of natural accidents.

For the Big Bang Theory, the universe formed through accidental collisions of atomic particles. For biological evolution, the species formed through accidental copying errors in the DNA called mutations. This is the story we have all been told. But what if the standard answer is not as convincing as we may have been led to believe. What if there are fundamental problems with the Big Bang and the evolutionary theory that scientists are well aware of but have not been made known to the general public.

In the last decade alone, compelling new evidences from the major fields of science have cast serious doubt on the evolutionary view of natural history. Discoveries so profound, if made known to the world, would have the power to drastically change our understanding of the past. Might the biblical view of origins as described in the book of Genesis offer a more reasonable explanation?

To some, it is extremely naïve to even consider the Genesis account of creation on the grounds that it is believed to be nothing more than a primitive myth and therefore totally incompatible with modern science. This stems from the widely held perception that creation is religion and evolution is science. But is this really true? Is it proper to equate evolution with science? Does science have the ability to address

questions regarding past events that we were not there to directly observe or verify? Events like the spontaneous origin of the universe, the origin of life from non-life and the evolution of the earliest life forms into mammals. Or might we be giving science a power it does not have? To answer this, it is important that we accurately define science as well as its limitations.

When we think of scientists in white lab coats analyzing cells under a microscope or chemists mixing acids and bases, it is known as observational science. This is the type of science that led to finding cures for diseases and our advanced technology — computers, smartphones, orbiting satellites and Mars rover robots. A good definition of observational science can be found in standard introductory level biology textbooks, which states, “Scientific inquiry is a powerful way to know nature, but there are limitations to the kinds of questions it can answer. These limits are set by science's requirements that hypotheses be testable and falsifiable and that observations and experimental results be repeatable” (Biology, Seventh Edition. Campbell/Reece).

Notice observational science has definable limitations to the kinds of questions it can answer. Hypotheses must be based on observations and experimentation. In addition, hypotheses must be testable and their results repeatable. Observable, testable and repeatable experimentation are the hallmarks of good observational science.

When biologists grow bacteria on a nutrient medium to study adaptations, growth rate changes, or sequence their DNA to determine which genes suffered mutations, they are practicing good observational science. But answering the question of where bacteria came from to begin with and their origin, is outside the bounds of observational science.

Science really is about the study of the operation of the present world and lot of people think that there are ways that science can study the past. Well, not really. When you dig up a fossil, people say they are looking at the past, but that is not the case because you are looking at the present. Fossils exist in the present. This is not to say that we cannot make some guesses about the past based on some of the scientific evidence we see in the present. Nevertheless, our worldview, our way of thinking and our view of history will obviously influence any reconstructive past. The same goes for stars and galaxies. When people look at stars and galaxies, they say that they are looking back in time, but that is not the case because the photons are hitting your eyes and you are looking at the stars at the present. Therefore, astronomy really takes place in the present. Some may even speculate how galaxies looked like thousands of years ago based on what they are seeing but the fact is that those types of claims are not scientifically testable.

The kind of science that makes computers work and puts people on the moon — observational science — is testable and repeatable in the present. It doesn't take place in the past, it takes place now.

According to Big Bang cosmologists, the universe began 13.7 billion years ago, the earth is said to have formed 4.5 billion years ago, the first fish evolved 530 million years ago, dinosaurs evolved 230 million years ago, mammals evolved 120 million years ago, the earliest primates evolved 50 million years ago, and Homo sapiens evolved from hominids roughly 200,000 years ago.

Realize the most significant evolutionary events all allegedly occurred in the unobservable, unrepeatable, untestable and therefore unverifiable past. Almost the entire evolutionary theory including the Big Bang

is outside the realm of observational science. All of the aforementioned past events and many more not mentioned are unamenable to the scientific process. No man was there as an eyewitness to provide for us firsthand knowledge of what actually took place. Thus evolution is more appropriately a history and not observational science.

Ernst Mayr is hailed by the scientific community as the Darwin of the twentieth century. As a distinguished evolutionary biologist, Mayr was more than qualified to make the admission that evolution is a history and not observational science. He affirmed this by saying, "Evolutionary biology in contrast with physics and chemistry is a historical science — the evolutionist attempts to explain events and processes that have already taken place. Laws and experiments are inappropriate techniques for the explication of such events and processes. Instead one constructs a historical narrative consisting of a tentative reconstruction of the particular scenario that led to the events one is trying to explain" (Scientific American, Vol. 283, No. 1).

Here Mayr did not place evolutionary biology on equal planes with physics and chemistry which are clear examples of observational science, instead he describes evolution as a historical science, a very inexact type of inquiry — a tentative reconstruction — meaning it is subject to change whenever the theorizer feels it is necessary to better fit the evidence.

When evolutionary scientists attempt to explain what they think happened in the past they first presuppose that the evolutionary view of history is correct. This view of history then serves as a framework from which all evidence and data are interpreted. Mayr described this presupposed view of history as a narrative — literally a story written by scientists based on what they believe happened in the unverifiable past.

The Biblical view of origins as described in the early chapters of Genesis (Chapters 1 to 11) is also considered a historical narrative. The Genesis account of creation is not written in a style typical of Hebrew mythology or poetry, instead, it is recorded as a sober historical account with precise chronological reference points carefully detailing major origins related events including the recent creation of the heavens and earth, the first male and female, a global flood and the formation of the various people groups and languages. The implications of this are profound. Rather than an issue of science versus faith, the creation-evolution controversy ultimately boils down to a face-off between two opposing histories. The major difference is that the evolutionary view of history was narrated by scientists within the last 150 years and is tentative to reconstruction whereas the Biblical view of history was recorded thousands of years ago and is not subject to continual revision.

The Evidence Scale Fallacy

Some might object to accepting the origins issue as a battle between two different histories and insist it actually comes down to a matter of evidence. You may think: "Do we really need to presuppose a certain view of history in order to accurately address the question of origins?" Wouldn't it be better to just let the evidence speak for itself? Well, this may sound like the most objective way to approach the origins issue. It is based upon a fundamental misconception about the nature and evidence called the evidence scale fallacy.

A lot of people have the impression that the way that you resolve the origins debate is to try to accumulate the most evidence as if there is a scale. An example is evolutionists having some evidence as well as creationists and whoever seems to have more has the scale weigh in their favor. The fact is that both parties have exactly the same evidence. Both have access to fossils and DNA patterns and both look at the same stars and galaxies and other evidences that have been left. It is not about evidence but a question on how the evidence is interpreted. What does the evidence mean, and what conclusions can we draw from it? All these is affected or influenced by our worldview, our way of thinking and our belief system. Evidence by itself doesn't mean anything, it needs interpretation. When you come across a rock, you can't objectively know how the rock got there simply by looking at it. It is our view of history that will tell us something about the past. We can certainly use evidence in the present and try to reconstruct past events but obviously our view of history is going to have a very profound influence on that. We can't escape that. We all have a view of history and an understanding of how the universe came to be and that will influence necessarily our understanding of the evidence.

Take for example the Grand Canyon, both creationists and evolutionists have access to the same geological features. In an attempt to explain how the Canyon formed, evolutionary geologists have traditionally interpreted it as having formed over millions of years through slow and gradual processes based on the evolutionary view of history, namely: the geologic time scale and uniformitarian assumptions. Geologists who accept the account of Noah's flood described in Genesis interpret the same evidence differently and describe its formation through catastrophic processes that occurred rapidly and relatively recently. This simple example describes the true nature of the origins issue.

Notice both creationists and evolutionists are interpreting the same evidence and coming to opposite conclusions. This is due to the evidence being interpreted through two very different views of history. This raises an important question: "If it all comes down to an interpretation of the evidence, how do we know which interpretation is correct?" To answer this, we need to visit the Adirondack mountains of New York State where a large boulder rests alone on the 2500 foot peak of Mount Azure. The mystery of how the boulder made its way to the top of the mountain occurred in the unobservable past. It is a historical science. No one alive today was there to verify through first-hand knowledge what actually took place. For this reason, this serves as an appropriate analogy for properly understanding the creation-evolution controversy. For the sake of simplicity, let's assume there are only two possible interpretations for how the boulder arrived at the peak of Mount Azure. The first interpretation is that Jane is abnormally strong and managed to push the 20 tonne boulder to the top of the mountain all by herself. The second interpretation is that the boulder was transported by glacial ice over the top of the Mount. When the glacier melted it left the boulder behind and is known as erratic geology.

Now, which interpretation is correct? Without hesitation you would immediately conclude the second interpretation is the right answer. But why was that such an easy decision to make? The answer is simple. The glacier interpretation is most consistent with the evidence from observational science making it the far more reasonable explanation. The same level of clarity is possible when investigating the topic of creation and evolution. Throughout this section, we will be examining key evidences from the major fields of science including biology, paleoanthropology and genetics. As we carefully examine the shared evidence, a key question to consider is which view of history, the Biblical view or the evolutionary view allows for an interpretation that is most consistent with observational science.

Evolution is often referred to as a very slow process occurring over many millions of years. For this reason evolutionary scientists openly acknowledge that large scale changes known as macro-evolution cannot be directly observed. Naturally this leads to the question: if it is not observable, then on what grounds can anyone claim evolution is a scientific fact? The typical response is to claim that although we have never seen macro-evolution we can see evolution happening today on a small scale known as micro-evolution.

Micro evolution involves tiny genetic modifications that result in superficial changes in an organism such as an increase in a bird's beak size. This type of minor changes help the organism adapt to a slightly different environment. No one denies that this type of adaptive fine tuning occurs through mutations and natural selection, however, proponents of evolution believe that given enough time the small observable changes seen in micro evolution will inevitably add up to large scale changes known as macro-evolution.

This is the micro-equals-macro fallacy which assumes macro evolution is essentially micro evolution extrapolated over long periods of time without limit. This is an example of unbounded extrapolation which is known to be extremely poor science. Although in theory both types of changes involve the same underlying genetic processes like recombination, mutation, selection, genetic drift and gene flow, there's a profound and essential difference between macro and micro-evolution that is often overlooked. Macro evolution requires vast amounts of additional genetic information meaning the formation of many new functional DNA sequences while micro evolution does not.

According to the evolutionary theory, all living creatures evolved from a single ancestral life form that lived billions of years ago — a micro organism believed to be similar to that of modern bacteria. As the first living organism to emerge from the primordial sea, it would have had minimal genetic information just enough to carry out the essential life functions. The reasonable estimate for the amount of DNA contained in a hypothetical primitive bacterium would be less than 500000 genetic letters equivalent to about two 500-page books of typewritten information. This may sound impressive but not compared to humans with 3.2 billion DNA letters in a single cell — the equivalent of approximately one thousand 500-page books. Thus, in order for an ancestral microbial species to evolve into man, a mind boggling amount of new functional DNA sequences would have to build up over time. This new genetic information would be essential in order to specify new functions and structures such as eyes, ears, brain, heart, lungs and a multitude of other biological features found in higher life forms.

The genetic specifications for even a single type of a higher life form represents a large library of information, yet there are millions of life forms: plants, sea creatures, birds, reptiles and mammals, each with their own library of genetic instructions.

Mutations: Are they Degenerative or Regenerative?

Evolutionists claim these new genetic specifications can arise through random mutations and the reproductive filter of natural selection. Textbooks offer a number of examples that are claimed to be a direct evidence of evolution in action. Let's look carefully at a couple popular examples to see whether they involve the addition of new functional DNA sequences in order for macro-evolution to be possible. Consider the observable changes occurring within canines. Wolves, coyotes, jackals, dingoes and the

numerous varieties of domesticated dogs are all believed to have descended from an ancestral wolf species.

In textbooks, the development of the various dog breeds is cited as a demonstrable example of evolution on a small scale. McGraw Hill's widely used biology textbook states this type of change will inevitably lead to large scale evolution over time. In making this claim the textbook authors are committing the micro-equals-macro fallacy, the blunder of employing unbounded extrapolation.

The superficial differences seen in the various dog breeds are not caused by the formation of new functional DNA sequences that are required for macro-evolution, instead, the differences are caused by degenerative mutations in a small number of already existing genes. Mutations in these genes are responsible for the variation in traits like coat color, face shape and foreshortened limbs. But such mutations are limited in the extent of change that they can produce before they disrupt the necessary function of those genes. Factoring in the well understood process of genetic recombination, the reshuffling of pre-existing genetic information and the formation of the many dog breeds is easily explained.

Although mutations have provided an additional source of variation for breeders to select from, this is not the type of change that macro-evolution requires since it has not resulted in any new genes or new genetic information. In fact, producing dog breeds through artificial selection results in an overall loss of genetic information. The non-desirable traits that are not selected are literally bred out of the gene group. This explains why it is possible to breed wolves and select for certain traits over a number of generations to produce chihuahuas; but you can never breed chihuahuas to get back to wolves. The DNA information necessary to get back to a wolf has been lost.

So everyone knows that within the dog kind we have lots of different breeds of dogs and some people might say, "Well, if we can see all these different breeds of dogs: long eared, short eared, long furred, short furred... certainly that's an example of new genetic information that's being added to have those traits." But when we observe this at the genetic level, that is not what we see. We are just seeing variation on traits that those organisms already have. The genes that code for fur in a dog can produce long fur, short fur and different colors in the dog's coat but they're never going to become wings or feathers because they don't have the information to be able to do that; and there's simply no genetic mechanism that allows you to add the information that you need for evolution to occur. All you see is variation within the traits that they already have.

The modern theory of evolution is founded on the concept that beneficial mutations are the raw material for eventually building new sets of genetic instructions. One of the most popularly cited examples of beneficial mutations is the development of bacterial resistance to antibiotics. Standard biology textbooks claim it as direct evidence for evolution. But is true evolution really taking place here?

Certain classes of antibiotics are considered prodrugs, which means they do not pose a threat to the bacteria until they are activated into their reactive or lethal form through the assistance of enzymes naturally produced by the bacteria. However, random mutations in the bacterium have been shown to disable the function of the required enzyme, preventing the antibiotic from converting into its lethal form, resulting in resistant bacteria.

Although these mutations may be considered beneficial since the bacteria are now able to survive the antibiotic treatments, the genetic information that encodes an otherwise useful enzyme was lost. This is the opposite direction required for macro evolution. In the long run these types of loss-of-function mutations are counterproductive to macro-evolution. For this reason, bacterial resistance to antibiotics cannot be considered as a direct evidence for evolution.

One of the ways in which bacteria become resistant to antibiotics is through horizontal gene transfer and this is something that it's pretty unique to bacteria as human beings and animals don't do it. What happens here is the process of how bacteria essentially swaps genetic information. So genetic information like an antibiotic resistant gene can be transferred from one bacterial organism to another; but simply transferring genetic information is not what evolution needs as they're both bacteria. The process didn't essentially change the essence of that bacteria and therefore that is not the type of genetic change that we need to go from one organism to another. We have to acquire lots of new information to generate new functional genes to go from one kind of organism to another.

For evolution to create higher life forms from lower life forms, there must be a very large increase in total genetic information. Additional genetic information is needed to encode the complex biological capabilities that characterize higher life forms. Any hypothetical large scale evolutionary change would require vast amounts of new functional DNA sequences which would have to arise through beneficial mutations filtered by natural selection. Although adaptive changes can occur through rare beneficial mutations, it is consistently at the expense of destroying DNA information as seen with bacterial resistance to antibiotics.

There are many mutations that are advantageous since they're beneficial in a way that helps an organism to adapt to a certain circumstance. But when we actually look at what happened, the mutation almost always involves loss of function such as a protein's proper functioning. So, there's a disease called sickle cell anemia where the red blood cells of the victims are misshapen. Instead of being shaped as biconcave discs, they are shaped like a crescent moon or a sickle and those deformed red blood cells can't carry as much oxygen as they should. These deformed cells are also prone to causing blood clots. Well, how is that beneficial?

If you have this terrible disease you're not as susceptible to malarial parasites. So, if you live in areas where malaria causes lots of deaths, you won't get infected by the parasites. In this situation, you are basically trading one pathology for another where it is better to have sickle cell anemia where you're sick but not dead than to get malaria and die. So it's a very bizarre idea to think that sickle cell anemia is a beneficial trait as there are some evolutionists who use it because there are very few convincing examples of "beneficial mutations."

The information-eroding nature of "beneficial mutations" make sense when we think about what mutations really are. They are literally random copying errors in the DNA. Think of them as genetic typographical errors. By their very nature, they disrupt cellular processes such as gene regulation and enzyme function by scrambling the organism's genetic instruction manual. They do not create information, they erode information bit by bit.

This type of genetic change occurring over deep time will never result in genome building evolution. It is going in the wrong direction informationally. Thus the common argument that given enough time, a series

of small changes — micro evolution — will eventually add up to large scale changes — macro evolution — is a fallacy.

The rarity of beneficial mutations complicates things further. It is widely acknowledged in the genetics community that harmful mutations vastly outnumber beneficial mutations. These destructive mutations are eroding the information content of the genome at a much faster rate than rare beneficial mutations could build it. So if you have bad mutations, even just a fraction of them accumulated over time in a very slow rate, and you have very few beneficial mutations to counteract that, you're going downhill.

The fact that beneficial mutations are very rare, and that most mutations are neutral or detrimental, is one of the best tested facts of biology. In addition, most of these harmful mutations cause very subtle biological effects. They are called slightly harmful or nearly neutral mutations because their effect is too subtle to be affected by natural selection. This means natural selection can do nothing to remove them from the population. They are below what is known as the selection threshold.

Consequently, these slightly harmful mutations are accumulating in the genome at a steady rate. With every generation, the average couple passes on roughly one hundred additional mutations to their children. It is because of these slightly harmful mutations that humankind is undergoing genetic degeneration. In fact, there is strong evidence that we are not evolving but rather devolving.

Although natural selection can slow genetic degeneration, it cannot stop it. The reason natural selection fails is because mutations are coming into the population faster than they can be selected away and also because most mutations, especially beneficial mutations are too subtle thus making their impact invisible to natural selection.

Genetic Entropy

Genetic entropy is increasingly being recognized as a very serious problem for the modern theory of evolution. From the 1950s to the present, the apparent certainty of genetic degeneration of man has been repeatedly acknowledged by leading population geneticists, some of whom played a central role in the development of the modern theory of evolution.

Contemporary population geneticist, Alexey Kondrashov titled his paper published in the journal of theoretical biology, “Contamination of the genome by very slightly deleterious mutations: Why have we not died a hundred times over.” To date, the problem of genetic degeneration remains unresolved despite numerous attempts by leaders in the field to rescue the theory.

The evidence from modern genetics demonstrates that the observable changes in animals are going in the wrong direction informationally to lead to large scale evolution. While species certainly have the ability to adapt, the extensive change is limited based on the available genetic information. Rather than one kind of creature evolving into a totally new kind through random mutations and natural selection, the Genesis account reveals that in the beginning God created distinct kinds of plants and animals, each to reproduce according to their kind. The first chapter in Genesis reads:

“And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so. And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and

cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind: and God saw that it was good.” Genesis 1:24-25

If what the Biblical view of biology suggests is true, that each basic kind of life arose independently, then Darwin's vision of a single tree of life with its root tracing back to a primordial bacterium, would have to be replaced with a forest of trees reflecting an independent origin for each form of life. Each tree branching out into its own diverse set of species and each tree having a built-in genetic diversity allowing for the formation of numerous variations — branches within those basic kinds — thus enabling their descendants to survive and adapt to a wide variety of environments.

This however is not macro evolution since it does not involve the formation of any new functional DNA sequences. It is simply the fragmentation of each created kind into beautiful and diversified varying species through the sorting, selection and reshuffling of the already existing genetic information just as the biblical view of biology suggests.

Paleoanthropology

Since the time of Darwin, many determined individuals have searched for missing links between ape and man. Periodically, fragmentary skeletons have been found and artists' reconstruction of their bones are presented to the public as undeniable evidence that man evolved from apelike creatures. To scientists who study their bones, these alleged transitional forms are called hominids.

A family tree or bush is often used to represent how hominids are thought to be related. Most of the hominid species are understood by experts in the field to be evolutionary dead ends. Apes or variants of humans that went extinct shown as broken side branches.

Paleoanthropologists generally recognized only a few hominid species in the direct human lineage. Among them are some of the most well known discoveries such as the famous Lucy skeleton. If human evolution is a valid theory, the hominid fossil should fall along a traceable path starting with an early apelike species such as Lucy into some form of *Homo habilis* intermediate then into the human looking *Homo erectus* and Neanderthal type and finally into modern *Homo sapiens*.

What you may not realize is that there are leading experts in the field that contest the status of each of these alleged hominid ancestors. Let's take a look at what we know about these hominids.

Lucy (*Australopithecus afarensis*) - Lucy is the nickname given to a partial fossil skeleton discovered in 1974 in the Afar region of Ethiopia by paleoanthropologist Donald Johanson. The bones of Lucy are believed to represent a single individual skeleton. Johanson claimed that Lucy belonged to an extinct population of ape like creatures that once roamed Africa between 3 to 4 million years ago. The species Lucy is said to represent was named by Johanson as *Australopithecus afarensis* meaning Southern ape from Afar. To date, over four hundred specimens have been attributed to Lucy's kind (afarensis) but nearly all of those consist of isolated bones or bone fragments that were found eroding out of the hillsides jumbled together with the fossils of all kinds of African species.

With only 20% of Lucy's skeleton preserved, it remains one of the most complete afarensis skeletons discovered. However, the bones attributed to Lucy and her kind were found disconnected and broadly

scattered across the Afar landscape. Johanson claims that Lucy is 40% complete. Well, actually if you count the missing bones of the hands and feet it's actually only 20% complete, so much of it is missing. Moreover, they had to sift 20 tons of sediment; so, they would stream them and get rid of all the loose sediment and then wash it by the river and they would pick out the bones that Johanson said may belong to Lucy's skeleton. There were hundreds of fragments so they had to sift not only just 20 tons of sediment but also had to cover an area of about fifty square meters. So, do all those bones belong to Lucy's skeleton? It is an open question.

In 2015, an evolutionary scientific journal showed that actually one of the vertebrae bones belongs to a baboon but for forty years it went unnoticed and Lucy was reconstructed in museums with that bone as a part of the skeleton all around the world. So, do we really know for sure if Lucy's skeleton and the broader kind belong to the same species? Well, I don't think we should trust that because even today numerous experts in the field have written extensively in the scientific literature that *afarensis* appears to be a commixture of ape bones and human bones. It is not a single species and a valid taxon according to these evolutionary paleoanthropologists.

It is widely acknowledged that the fossils attributed to *afarensis* display a substantial range of variation in both size and anatomy leading many paleo-experts to question whether all of the remains belong to the same species. In fact, Johanson originally reported in the journal "Nature" that at least two different species from separate genera were represented in his collection of bones. He described some of these fossils as looking virtually identical to modern humans while other fossils he described as looking distinctly like apes. Later, Johanson decided to reclassify all of these fossils including the human looking bones to a single new species which he named *Australopithecus afarensis*.

The extensive range of variations seen in these fossils were now explained as physical differences between males and females of the same species called **sexual dimorphism**. To make the story work, paleoanthropologists have claimed that the larger human looking bones belonged to males that walked upright like modern humans whereas the smaller ape looking bones belonged to females that lived in the trees. However, experts in the field have taken issue with Johanson's sexual dimorphism hypothesis and have cited evidence that his original interpretation was more accurate, that *afarensis* is a jumble of ape and human bones.

This makes more sense as we have never seen a sexually dimorphism in any species where the males locomote fundamentally differently than the females and so the bones attributed to Lucy are actually a mixture of ape and human bones, therefore Lucy can't be placed in a valid taxon as it is not a real species. This has actually been promoted by numerous experts in the field including famous paleo-expert Richard Leakey and his mother Mary Leakey.

In 1976, footprints fossilized in ash were found in Laetoli, Tanzania by British paleoanthropologist Mary Leakey and were dated to be 3.7 million years old. Researchers described the Laetoli footprints as looking virtually identical to those made by humans. The fossilized footprints lack a fundamental characteristic of all living apes, a grasping big toe. In describing her own discovery, Mary Leakey acknowledged that they don't look any different from modern human footprints, an observation that is widely acknowledged by experts in the field. This, however, presents a fundamental challenge for evolutionary scientists, since modern humans are not supposed to have existed 3.7 million years ago. Such a finding would effectively falsify the ape to man theory. To resolve this conflict, Johanson and colleagues claimed that Lucy's kind

formed the human looking footprints in Laetoli, even though the footprints were found 1000 miles away from where Lucy was discovered in Hadar and dated over half a million years older. The actual skeletal remains of Lucy could not substantiate their claim either because the critical bones of the feet were missing. Soon after the discovery of Lucy, a large collection of fossils recovered in a separate site in Hadar cast more doubt on these claims.

The sample included a number of hand and foot bones including a partial foot skeleton that was assigned to Lucy's species *afarensis*. In the American Journal of Physical Anthropology, evolutionary anatomists Jack Stern and Randall Susman performed a comprehensive analysis of the hand and foot bones. It was clear to these researchers that the Hadar hands and feet were strikingly similar to living African apes. They concluded that there is no evidence that any living primate has long curved heavy muscled hands and feet for any purpose other than to meet the demands of full or part time tree dwelling life. This has left evolutionists with a dilemma which Scientific American has described as the "world's oldest whodunit, an unsolved mystery."

If Lucy's kind can not be credited with forming the human looking Laetoli footprints, then who or what did? In an attempt to solve this mystery, former researcher of the Laetoli footprints, Russell Tuttle suggests a far-fetched idea.

Tuttle writes in Natural History, "In any case, we should shelve the loose assumption that the Laetoli footprints were made by Lucy's kind, *Australopithecus afarensis*. The Laetoli footprints hint that at least one other hominid roamed Africa at about the same time."

Perhaps a better explanation for why the footprints look identical to humans is simply because they were formed by humans. Tuttle admits this would be the most reasonable interpretation except for one problem. He believes the dating methods prove the ash layers were deposited long before the first humans evolved. But what if the dates obtained were wrong? As it turns out the Laetoli footprints were dated using the potassium-argon method, a radioisotope dating method that has an embarrassing track record of yielding exaggerated ages — millions of years — when testing its accuracy on rocks of known age that formed recently.

The major problem with all the radioactive dating methods is the first assumption of the initial conditions. It is assumed that when a volcano erupts and the lava flows over the ground, all the gases escape and when the rock cools, you only have the parent potassium in the rock. This is a big problem as we weren't there in the past to test that assumption and that's why it's critical that we look at present-day volcanic eruptions. One of the things that we have discovered is that the argon doesn't escape. A classic example is at Mount St. Helens. It erupted in the 1980s with the various lava flows building up a new dome. This lava flow that we know erupted in the 1980s was tested ten years later with potassium-argon and what was discovered was that it gave an age of up to over a million years. What we are seeing here is that a rock that is supposed to be 10 years old gives an exaggerated age through this radioactive dating method. Therefore, if we can't trust radioactive dating methods for rocks and fossils of known ages, should we trust it with rocks and fossils of unknown ages. This is a real problem for evolutionists because they use such methods in establishing a chronology for the supposed human ancestor fossils. Therefore, a more reasonable interpretation of the evidence is that the dating methods are unreliable and the Laetoli footprints look human because they were formed by humans.

Handy Man (*Homo habilis*) - The next alleged hominid species on the path to modern humans has traditionally been *Homo habilis*. The discovery of *Homo habilis* was announced to the world in 1964. The bones were found in Olduvai Gorge, Tanzania and consisted of two broken skull fragments, a deformed lower jaw bone, a partial hand and a tooth molar. Famous paleoanthropologists, Louis and Mary Leakey claimed the fossils belonged to the earliest toolmaker and was given the name “Handy man”. To this day, *Homo habilis* is presented in textbooks as an ape like ancestor to man as few people realize there is an ongoing debate among the paleoanthropology community regarding the status of *Homo habilis*. Most experts in the field now deny *Homo habilis* a position in the direct human lineage and many others reject the validity of the species as a classification. Much of the controversy has to do the extremely incomplete and fragmentary nature of the remains.

None of the bones identified as *Homo habilis* were found physically connected to a more complete skeleton. The loose bones were scattered widely across the excavated area jumbled together in a mixed bone bed containing many different species including monkeys, extinct apes and humans. Some of the bones are described as remarkably like those of modern humans and others remarkably ape like.

Paleo-experts have attempted to resolve these contradictory findings by reassigning the appropriate bones to the extinct ape genus *Australopithecus*. To a growing number of experts the fossils of *Homo habilis* look too much like a tree dwelling ape to be considered a human ancestor. Among them is Bernard Wood, a world renowned evolutionary paleoanthropologist and foremost authority on *Homo habilis* who has extensively studied the fossil remains for the past fifty years since its discovery.

In the journal titled 'Nature', Wood makes the following assessment: “Even with all the fossil evidence and analytical techniques from the past 50 years, a convincing hypothesis for the origin of *Homo* remains elusive... the species is too unlike *H. erectus* to be its immediate ancestor.” Here, Wood has come to the firm conclusion that *Homo habilis* is not our ancestor.

Upright man (*Homo erectus*) - In the late 19th Century, Dutch anatomist Eugene Dubois set off to the Indonesian island of Java. Along the banks of the Solo River he came upon a skullcap, a femur bone and a tooth. The leg bone resembled a modern human's but the skullcap displayed some unusual features. Dubois interpreted the skullcap as having ape like qualities and decides to classify the fossils to a new species that he named *Pithecanthropus erectus*. The Greek name literally translates as upright ape-man in accordance with Dubois' conviction that humans evolved from ape-like creatures.

Since then, a number of specimens from Africa, Europe and Asia have been found and all have subsequently been renamed *Homo erectus*, reflecting its current status as the immediate ancestor to *Homo sapiens*; a claim that has not been substantiated by the fossil evidence. Most of the recovered bones are highly fragmentary and they consist of fragmented skulls, jaws, isolated teeth and a single intact femur bone.

Only one nearly complete *Homo erectus* skeleton has been found and nicknamed 'Turkana Boy' and this was recovered in Kenya in 1984. For the first time, it provided paleoanthropologists with a clearer picture of what *Homo erectus* looked like. The anatomy of the skeleton and overall size of 'Turkana Boy' is unquestionably human. Dental evidence and unfused growth plates indicated to anatomists that had he lived until adulthood, he would have grown to over six feet tall. Experts in the field now universally acknowledge that the overall anatomy of *Homo erectus* overlaps extensively with modern humans. In fact,

a number of evolutionary paleo-experts insist upon reclassifying them as *Homo sapiens*. In their view, the skeletal features fall within the range of human variation. In addition, archaeological evidence indicates *Homo erectus* was able to perform sophisticated tasks and complete extraordinary feats requiring modern human intelligence including the ability to construct a seaworthy vessel and navigate significant stretches of open seas.

Neanderthal Man (*Homo neanderthalensis*) - Paleoanthropologists have traditionally interpreted Neanderthals as a separate sub-human species. In popular movies they are portrayed as half-stooped British cave men with low intelligence. Few people realize this mental image stems from an outdated evolutionary perception that neanderthals are a missing link between ape and man. In 1908, French anatomist Marcellin Boule fraudulently arranged the bones to appear ape-like with a grasping big toe and a bent-knee bent-hip posture. In his view, Neanderthals were a degenerate race, too primitive to be considered *Homo sapiens*. Boule's errors were eventually corrected. Now with thousands of Neanderthal specimens and a complete skeleton assembled, it is clear to paleoanthropologists that Neanderthals were human in their anatomy albeit more robustly built but with few relatively minor differences. Experts on human evolution acknowledge that a Neanderthal in a modern dress would go unnoticed in a city.

Foremost authority on Neanderthals, Erik Trinkaus confirms: “Detailed comparisons of Neanderthal skeletal remains with those of modern humans have shown that there is nothing in Neanderthal anatomy that conclusively indicates locomotor, manipulative, intellectual, or linguistic abilities inferior to those of modern humans.”

Archaeology has further revealed an impressive cultural inventory including fire, stone tools tailored clothing, art, musical instruments, cosmetics, jewelry and ceremonial burial of their loved ones — a defining aspect of what it means to be human.

In 2010, Swedish geneticist Svante Pääbo and his international team of researchers sequenced the first ever nearly complete Neanderthal genome, confirming once and for all that they were fully human and members of our own species — *Homo sapiens*.

When DNA was discovered in Neanderthal bones that were supposed to be too old to contain any of it, it sent shockwaves to the scientific community because the evolutionary model places the existence of Neanderthals between 30,000 years to 100,000 year ago. Fossils that existed in such a timeframe shouldn't have DNA. From the DNA sequencing, it is clear that interbreeding happened between Neanderthals and Humans. This evidence, together with their genome structure, proves that Neanderthals were humans. Thus, the age old evolutionary assumption that Neanderthals were a sub-human species has been disproven.

Evolutionary paleoanthropologists traditionally expected the hominid fossil record to reveal a traceable linear progression where an ape-like Australopithecus species such as Lucy evolved into *Homo habilis* which evolved into *Homo erectus* which evolved into *Homo sapiens*. In recent decades, however, this view has been dramatically overturned. Instead of a simple human family tree with a few branches, the paleo-community now describes the hominid fossil record as a messy bush with many disconnected branches showing no clear evolutionary progression from ape to man. The pattern that is emerging in the hominid fossil record is surprisingly consistent with a Biblical view of human origins recorded in Genesis which teaches that humans and apes were created as independent forms of life.

Indeed, there appears to be a clear separation between two distinct types in the fossil record. The human type called “Homo” and the extinct ape type called “Australopithecines.” These two types are found together in rock strata of equivalent age as far back as hominid fossils are found just as the Laetoli footprints have confirmed. This shows that humans have always coexisted with a diversity of apes rather than one evolving into the other.

Genetics

It is hard to find anyone who has not heard the often repeated claim that humans and chimpanzees are genetically 98 to 99% identical. This has been promoted to the world as proof that humans share a common evolutionary ancestor with chimps. However, recent studies now challenge this claim. Evolutionary geneticists have acknowledged that the actual genetic differences are far greater than we've been told. For example, primate evolutionist, Todd Preuss states: “It is now clear that the genetic differences between humans and chimpanzees are far more extensive than previously thought; their genomes are not 98% or 99% identical.

Earlier studies published in the evolutionary scientific literature reported an overall DNA similarity of 98 to 99%. However, large portions of the chimp genome did not align with the human genome and so were excluded from the reported estimates. For instance, the algorithm parameters used in the major milestone publication in 'Nature' reported by the chimpanzee sequencing and analysis consortium omitted over 100 million DNA letters. When accounting for these large non-alignable regions and other emitted sequenced data, the actual chimp/human DNA similarity is significantly lower than the 98 to 99% identity claims.

When evolutionists originally brought this claims, they didn't have full genomic data and so they actually based their estimates of similarity upon little snippets of the genome. Here, they were choosing protein coding sequences which are the most similar and explain why we have similar biochemistry. So, initially they were saying that 98 to 99% of the genome must be similar between chimps and humans. The textbooks still say that although geneticists know that that is not correct.

What is the actual genetic difference between humans and chimpanzees? This is a question that comes up over and over again in the creation-evolution debate. So, let's stick down to what the scientific data actually says. If you look at the 2005 Chimpanzee Genome Paper in Nature and look at the subsequent papers such as the Bonobo Paper, the Gorilla Paper and the Orangutan Paper, you will realize that all of them give a consistent answer that most of our DNA can be aligned to a chimpanzee's and vice versa and in that region that does align, it's about 1 to 2% different in terms of single letter differences. This brings us to a second question: Are there sections of human DNA that fail to align to a chimpanzee's and are there sections of a chimpanzee's DNA that fail to align to a human's? The answer is yes; and it is far more DNA than that 1 or 2% difference. So, if you incorporate all of these numbers together, the stuff that aligns is almost identical and the stuff that can't be aligned at all gives an approximate percentage of 85. What is even more important is what that percentage translates to in terms of absolute differences. So, an 85% identity and a 15% difference in terms of raw DNA letters, represents 300 to 400 million single DNA letter differences. That's a massive number.

The evolutionary theory claims that humans evolved from a hypothetical chimp-like ancestor roughly 6 million years ago. This is said to have occurred through a long series of beneficial mutations. In light of the actual genomic differences between humans and chimps, this is simply not genetically feasible.

The more accurate chimp/human DNA similarity estimate of 85% represents 300 to 400 million DNA letter differences — an extreme level of genetic discontinuity. This means, in order to evolve a chimp-like ancestor to modern humans, hundreds of millions of beneficial mutations need to arise in an ancestral population. The difficulty with accomplishing this has to do with the extremely long waiting time required for establishing even the smallest sense of mutually dependent mutations. Even granting a best-case scenario for evolution by generously assuming that human and chimp DNA is 99% identical, the remaining 1% would still be a difference of 30 million DNA letters — an impossible genetic barrier for evolution to traverse in six million years.

Let's assume that it's still only 1% because that's not correct as no one believes that now. To get 1% of a genome difference requires 30 million mutations. That is a lot of new information. And waiting for 8 specific mutations, takes more time than the evolutionary time period since the Big Bang. So, the answer is no. It is not conceivable. You cannot change the program of an ape into the programming for a human in any amount of time.

People ask: “Well, what is the problem? You're saying there is a hundred new mutations per person per generation in a big population. That's billions of mutations every generation. What is the problem of getting this information that codes for something?” The difference is that genetic damage is non-specific. Deleterious mutations can happen anywhere in the genome, there is no specificity and therefore, creating damage is easy. In the case of a manuscript or a computer program, it is easy to correct them by changing letters, but for genes, it is really hard to improve them, and you have to wait for a very long time for the specific letter to mutate into a specific alternative letter at a specific site to actually create any type of benefit. So the waiting time for beneficial mutations is different and longer than the waiting time for neutral or deleterious mutations. For specific and beneficial mutations, you have to wait for a really really long time for it to happen.

Waiting for the right mutations to arise and become established in a pre-human population greatly exceeds evolutionary time scales. Leading evolutionary geneticists acknowledge it is a serious problem for the theory and devastating for the ape-to-man scenario.

Population geneticist Michael Lynch, confesses the following in the *Journal of Molecular Biology and evolution*: “A central problem in the evolutionary theory concerns the mechanisms by which adaptations requiring multiple mutations emerge in natural populations.”

Lynch's calculations suggest the length of time required for just two specific mutations to become established in a pre-human population is over 200 million years which is beyond the 6 million year time span during which an ape-like creature is said to have evolved into man. Other studies reporting in scientific literature show similar results

Evolutionary geneticists Rick Durrett and Deena Schmidt of Cornell University report in *The Annals of Applied Probability* that the average waiting time to form a slightly longer DNA sequence of eight specific mutations is on the order of 650 million years but this estimate is incomplete. When accounting

for random loss due to a well-established principle known as genetic drift, the actual waiting time should be a hundred fold longer, roughly 65 billion years. This is four times longer than the reputed age of the universe, assuming a Big Bang singularity 13.7 billion years ago.

At best, all evolution can hope to accomplish in the prescribed 6 million year time span, is the formation of a tiny DNA sequence, no more than a few genetic letters in length and totally incapable of producing a single new gene.

Modern genetics has demonstrated that it is impossible for humans to have evolved from a chimp-like ancestor via random mutations. It is an unbridgeable genetic gap for evolution to traverse, even given billions of years. If humans did not evolve from ape-like creatures then where did we come from. The Genesis account of creation states that God made Adam and Eve, not as mythical beings but as the literal historical ancestors of all living people. They were the first two human beings created, with all humans descending from this first couple. From a purely genetic standpoint, is it scientifically feasible that all humans descended from a single mother and a single father? Many insist this is absurd and yet the genetic evidence for a literal Adam and Eve is inside each one of us and it is found in our DNA.

In 1987, a milestone paper was published in the journal 'Nature' by leading evolutionary geneticists who announced the results of a mitochondrial DNA analysis. Geneticists from the University of California found that all humans are descended from one woman thought to have lived in Africa 100,000 to 200,000 years ago.

Their results sent shockwaves throughout the scientific community and called for a major rewrite of the evolutionary view of human origins to accommodate the new data. The revision gave rise to the now widely accepted “Out of Africa” theory. Proponents of the theory couldn't help but notice its uncanny resemblance to the Biblical Eve.

In acknowledgement of this, they gave the genetic mother of us all the name “Mitochondrial Eve.” According to the evolutionary perspective, Mitochondrial Eve was an unnamed woman who evolved out of Africa from a *Homo erectus* population of ape men. Not long after the first mitochondrial DNA studies revealed a single mother of us all, evolutionary geneticists found similar results when analyzing sequences on the male Y-chromosome. In 1997, a team of researchers from Stanford University reported to the American Society of Human Genetics that all men inherited their Y-chromosome from a single male ancestor. The sequencing of thousands of Y-chromosomes from diverse people groups living around the world has revealed an overall lack of Y-chromosome diversity. All men share the same Y-chromosome plus a small number of mutations consistent with a single male ancestor of the human race. Once again, evolutionary geneticists couldn't help but give the father of us all a Biblical name, “Y-chromosome Adam. Just as they did with Mitochondrial Eve, evolutionists interpret Y-chromosome Adam to be an evolved ape man from Africa that lived sometime around 100,000 to 200,000 years ago.

The evolutionary community acknowledges that there is a literal Y-chromosome Adam and a literal Mitochondrial Eve. They say it is clear that all of the Y-chromosomes on this planet trace back to a single individual who didn't live so long ago. The Y-chromosome is only passed through the males (father to son) while the mitochondrial chromosome is only transferred through the females. Geneticists agree that all people on the planet get their mitochondria from a woman who lived not so long ago and this is uncontested. Initially, from the estimates of evolutionists on how long those individuals lived, they

claimed that they didn't live in the same time span. Now that they've reworked their numbers, they are always reassessing the time scales and many have come to a conclusion that Mitochondrial Eve and Y-chromosome Adam lived in the same time span.

There are two fundamental differences between the Adam and Eve of the Bible and the evolutionary interpretation of Mitochondrial Eve and Y-chromosome Adam. The first difference has to do with time and the second has to do with population size. The Genesis account indicates Adam and Eve lived recently, just thousands of years ago and that they were the only two people alive at the time of their creation. The evolutionary model claims they lived around 100,000 to 200,000 years ago and belonged to a hominid population of 10,000 individuals. But as you will see, it is not the genetic data that conflicts with the Biblical account of Adam and Eve; the conflict comes from inferences about time and population size.

Evolutionary geneticists estimate that genetic Adam and Eve lived around 100,000 to 200,000 years ago using a method known as the molecular clock. The technique relies on the assumption that mutations accumulate in certain regions of the genome at a constant rate over deep time. Evolutionary scientists have to further assume that humans evolved from a chimp-like ancestor roughly 6 million years ago in order to calibrate the molecular clock. Both claims are problematic and have been called into question by the genetics community.

Distinguished evolutionary geneticist, David Reich of Harvard, confesses in the publication 'Nature': "The fact that the clock is so uncertain is very problematic for us. It means that the dates we get out of genetics are really quite embarrassingly bad and uncertain."

Scientists are now using a more straightforward approach that does not require ape-to-man evolutionary assumptions to determine mutation rates. It involves directly measuring mutation rates in the present comparing parents and offspring known as the pedigree method. When comparing DNA sequences between parents and children, the measured mutation rates are typically 10 to 20 times higher than those inferred based on assumptions of ape-to-man evolution. When the molecular clock is calibrated using the empirically measured mutation rates, both mitochondrial Eve and Y-chromosome Adam lived just thousands of years ago. In discussing the age of Mitochondrial Eve, evolutionary scientists in 'Trends in Genetics' acknowledge this discrepancy:

"MtDNA datasets often exhibit anomalous patterns. One of these anomalies is the discrepancy between mtDNA mutation rates observed in evolutionary timescales (e.g. in dating the divergence between two species) and those measured within family pedigrees. If the high mutation rates seen in some human pedigrees were used to calculate the age of our most-recent female common ancestor, she would have lived just 6000 years ago, a date more consistent with Biblical Eve than Mitochondrial Eve." Trends in Genetics, Vol. 19, No. 2, February 2003.

There is a long standing debate and argument in genetics that deals with the difference between what's called the phylogenetic mutation rate and the genealogical mutation rate. If you look at a family, you can count the differences between the people and see that they have had some mutations. Through this, you can actually calculate a mutation rate over time in today's timing — known time — as we know what the mutation rate is. The evolutionary community doesn't like to use that rate because it's too fast. They use what is called the phylogenetic rate where they look at the differences between humans and chimpanzees

— not the real rate, but the differences — and they say that we have been separated for so many millions of years. There is a time when evolutionists agreed that the difference was 3 million years. Now it's 6 million years with some evolutionists arguing that it's 13 million years because they are having a hard time dealing with this mathematically.

Take the differences between humans and chimpanzees in some gene like mitochondria or Y-chromosomes and divide that by the supposed time that separates us (6 million years) and you'll get a very slow mutation rate. But if you look at the people that live today, count up the number of differences between them and divide that by the time span since their ancestor lived (maybe their great great grandfather), you are going to get a mutation rate that is much faster. When we use that rate, Adam and Eve fall into the Biblical timeframe. So when we use today's science which is measurable and we know is true, Adam and Eve are Biblical.

While the actual genetic data reveals a single Mitochondrial Eve ancestor and a single Y-chromosome ancestor, evolutionists have insisted they must have lived in a larger population. For this reason, they caution the general public not to mistake the evolutionary Adam and Eve with the Adam and Eve of the Bible; yet they acknowledge there can be no direct evidence for the larger population size of 10,000 because all other mitochondrial and Y-chromosome lineages supposedly died off removing all traces of their existence, leaving just one “lucky mother” and one “lucky father” just as paleo-expert Chris Stringer said.

In an attempt to explain what would otherwise be another remarkable Biblical coincidence, proponents of the ape-to-man model invoke what is known as the **“Coalescent Theory.”** This theory assumes that over many generations, it is inevitable that eventually only a single mitochondrial and Y-chromosome lineages will remain.

The “Coalescent theory” is based upon the assumption of random mating. So, you need a single population whose persons have equal likelihood of intermarriage. That has never been the case from an evolutionary point of view. Humans and pre-humans have always been in tribes that are separated and so, there is no random mating. In fact, if you look at the charts that show coalescence, all you have to do is to look and see one sub population among dozens or hundreds of other subpopulations and those would be producing a different coalescence to a different Adam or to a different Eve. Basically the coalescence argument fails and so their rebuttal position is not scientifically valid. It is relatively reckless.

Evolutionary scientists reasoned that if humanity started with just two people, it could not explain the total amount of human diversity we see today. For this reason, a population of 10,000 became a central tenet of the current model.

It is typically assumed that Adam and Eve would have had no genetic variants and no genetic diversity. However, there's no reason to assume they were created as nearly identical clones. If Adam and Eve were created with built-in diversity for traits such as skin color, all of the different looking people groups could easily arise in a Biblical timeframe. There would be no reason to wait millions of years for the slow accumulation of mutations if the diversity was encoded in their genomes right from the beginning.

If Adam and Eve were heterozygous as we would reasonably expect, extensive genetic diversity would quickly arise simply through sexual reproduction which reshuffles pre-existing variation to produce different combinations of traits.

The idea that God created an initial pair with differences between them and within them is called heterozygosity. This is an idea that has massive consequences in modern genetics and virtually all of genetic discussions. It also provides a convenient explanation that is very plausible for how you get all the ethno-linguistic differences that we see today. Humans are considered one species and we can produce variety in a single generation. So, if a dark-skinned Sudanese person marries light-skinned Finnish individual, their children will have an intermediate skin tone that has features from both parents; also, it can happen that in the same generation, an Australian Aborigine and a Han Chinese get married and they have children. If the offspring of these two mixed marriages had children, they could produce a whole diversity of individuals. Why is that? This is because people today still have heterozygosity which is a lesser form of heterozygosity than what Adam and Eve had. In other words, Adam and Eve could have produced in their many children every version of human that we see today. Once you have an original pair, an original population and an original set of eight that has heterozygosity if we are talking about the Flood, you can explain people groups just like that.

A striking example of built-in genetic variation can be seen in the example of twins born from mid-brown parents. Mother Kylee Hodgson and father Remi Horder gave birth to twins — Remee and Kian — who appeared racially different. The two-toned fraternal twins shared the same womb and were born a minute apart. What most people would typically see as racial differences arose in a single generation due to gene segregation. Just like people living today, one can reasonably expect Adam and Eve to have had a large pool of genetic variation built in to their genomes.

Prior to modern genetics, evolutionary scientists claimed that they were fundamentally different races of humans that evolved in diverse parts of the world over a long period of time. This model was known as the “Multiregional Hypothesis.” This perception changed with the advent of DNA sequencing which revealed that all human beings are remarkably similar genetically. It is now well established among the scientific community that all people are 99.9% genetically identical regardless of their skin color or ethnicity. The so-called racial features that we tend to focus on are essentially only skin-deep reflecting trivial differences in our genetic material. Physical traits like eye shape and melanin production amount to a miniscule 0.012% difference in our DNA. This means that regardless of our cultural differences, genetically, we are all part of one big human family.

God created every organism and designed them in a way that they have internal diversity. Therefore, you don't have to wait for mutations. So, the waiting time goes away if you want adaptation without deep waiting time. Even a single organism has heterozygosity where you would see a lot of genetic diversity.

Two individuals have four chromosome sets and they have the ability to basically accommodate every possible variant. Therefore, two people are enough to allow for a vast amount of genetic diversity that could be used by natural selection and adaptations in new environments, as they would not need deep time to do that.

The findings from modern genetics have compelled evolutionary scientists to develop a revised story of human origins that shares many striking similarities with the Biblical account of the Tower of Babel

dispersion. The new model is called the “Out of Africa Theory” and has been popular for many years. This theory proposes that there was a near extinction event causing a population bottleneck that reduced humanity to a single breeding population of just a few thousand survivors.

In the “Out of Africa Theory” it is postulated that there was a human population of about 10,000 people for an indeterminate amount of time. They never really say how long it is but let's say 10,000 to 100,000 years. Let's compare a modern species that has about that many individuals like the African cheetah. The members of this species are having massive problems: birth defects are increasing, reproductive incompatibility in couples is increasing, litter size is decreasing, and all the population biologists are essentially assuming that cheetahs are going to go extinct. How did *Homo sapiens* evolve? Evolutionists claim that we supposedly went from *Homo erectus* to *Homo sapiens* during a population bottleneck that should have driven us to extinction.

This theoretical near-extinction event has been used to explain why all humans are nearly identical genetically. The “Out of Africa Theory” claims all living humans originated from this small population (about 10,000 individuals) that lived in the general vicinity of Northeast Africa. Alternative studies suggest that the small founding population was a little further North in the general vicinity of the Middle East. The survivors of this theoretical near-extinction event suddenly grew very rapidly, splitting into numerous smaller tribes which dispersed outward and gradually filled Europe, Africa, Asia and eventually the Americas. Each initial tribe gave rise to its own language and culture and continued to split and disperse to form the people groups and languages we see today. Each migrating tribe would have carried with it a different sampling of the original population's gene pool, rapidly producing the distinctive features that some use to define race. In this model, mutations would occur but they are not necessary to explain these distinctive features and this means deep time would not be required either.

Just using standard population genetic principles, we can explain the origin of races easily in hundreds of thousands of years. All we need is the population to fragment into smaller populations. Isolation by distance is going to cause changes over time independently in each population either through natural selection or just random drift. So, we have a model for that at the Tower of Babel. A few hundred years after the Flood, God separated the nations according to the male lineages (The Y-chromosome) that define each population and they spread out on the earth; and they would have remained separated from one another because of language differences for a time. That's all we need. Once you do that, you're going to have regional differences amongst the people. So, all of a sudden you'll have people that will start to look different based on where they live. Complexion and facial features are some of these differences that we can see today. Isolation in a short amount of time is what was needed for all these differences to be manifested among the different races we see today.

Evolutionary geneticists reporting in the proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences have named this specific model, the “Instantaneous Divergence Model.” This model is virtually indistinguishable from the Biblical model of the human dispersion associated with the Tower of Babel as recorded in Genesis chapter 11.

“And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech... So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.” Genesis 11:1,8-9.

From a Biblical standpoint, how do we know that these people were once together after the Flood? We can see this in the established cultures about the stories of the Flood that were later adapted and corrupted by adding mythological elements to the original Noah's Flood event that took place just thousands of years ago as explained in the Bible. We have the Mavantara-Sandhya in Hinduism, Deucalion and Pyrrha in Greek mythology, the Cheyenne flood story and the Epic of Gilgamesh among the people of Mesopotamia.

In all these findings from the various fields of science, we can see the consistency of the Biblical account of creation and its validity through the ages unlike the evolutionary model that keeps changing its story.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

RADIOMETRIC DATING

Introduction

The Bible has God miraculously creating the world and everything in it in just six days about 6000 years ago, but the theory of evolution has a much different time scale taking millions of years to go from goo to me and you by a way of the zoo. Which view is correct? Continue reading to find out.

The very first chapter of the Bible states that God created the universe, earth, land and sea and everything in them in just six solar days. We know the six days of creation were ordinary days because the Bible frames each of the days using evening and morning and then assigns a number to each. God himself wrote that the days were real days when he inscribed the ten commandments with his own hand, stating that we should work and rest in a cycle that matches His creation week of six days followed by a day of rest.

We can look back at Scripture in reference to the fourth commandment and ask: “When did God make the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them.” Well, the obvious answer is that God was referring to the creation account in Genesis where the days are even defined in the text itself as normal solar days.

Also, we know that the creation week happened just thousands, not millions of years ago because the Bible traces back human genealogy to Adam who was created on the sixth day as the last of God's creation.

Adam was charged to take dominion over all that God had just created and he started his rule by naming all of the animals.

This is how the Bible explains; that the earth and everything in it was created in 6 days just about six thousand years ago. The evolutionary view on the other hand, is built on the foundation of deep time, with almost every pillar of the theory depending on millions of years. We see this idea promoted in books even starting from children's books, museums around the world, state parks across the world and in several movies and TV shows.

The following is an example of how high school biology textbooks state that deep time is the foundation of the evolution theory by acknowledging the following:

“Evolution takes a long time. If life has evolved, then Earth must be very old. Geologists now use radioactivity to establish the age of certain rocks and fossils. This kind of data could have shown that the Earth is young. If that had happened, Darwin’s ideas would have been refuted and abandoned. Instead, radioactive dating indicates that Earth is about 4.5 billion years old—plenty of time for evolution and natural selection to take place.” Kenneth R. Miller and Joseph S. Levine, *Biology*. (Boston, MA.: Pearson, 2006), p. 466.

But as we show here, geologists do not use radioactivity to establish the age of certain rocks. They instead use selected radioactivity results to confirm what they need to see. As discussed in the previous chapter, this viewpoint, being secular, contradicts God's stated Word in Genesis and even the Ten Commandments, where He wrote with His own hand that He created the heavens, Earth, sea, and all that is in them in six days (Exodus 20:11).

Belief in deep time rests upon evolution's required time. That's sure putting a lot of faith in something that can't be tested through direct observation. After all, plenty of assumptions go into the calculations, as we'll discuss in this chapter.

Keep in mind that while this chapter reviews the technical details behind radiometric dating, only two very basic but completely catastrophic "fatal flaws" undermine radiometric dating.

The first fatal flaw is that it relies upon untestable assumptions. The entire practice of radiometric dating stands or falls on the veracity of four untestable assumptions.

The assumptions are untestable because we cannot go back millions of years to verify the findings done today in a laboratory, and we cannot go back in time to test the original conditions in which the rocks were formed. If these assumptions that underlie radiometric dating are not true, then the entire theory falls flat, like a chair without its four legs.

The second fatal flaw clearly reveals that at least one of those assumptions must actually be wrong because radiometric dating fails to correctly date rocks of known ages.

For example, in the case of Mount St. Helens, scientists watched rocks being formed in the 1980s, but when they sent the samples to a laboratory 10 years later for dating, the 10-year-old rocks returned ages of hundreds of thousands to millions of years.

Similarly, some rocks return with radiometric "ages" twice as old as the accepted age for earth. Most rocks return with conflicting radiometric "ages." In these cases, researchers select results that match what they already believe about the age of the Earth.

An overview of Radiometric Dating

Fossil remains are found in sedimentary rock layers. Layers of sediment form when various size particles (e.g., dirt, rocks, and vegetation) accumulate in places such as deserts, rivers, lakes, and the ocean.

Most texts teach that it takes a long time for these sediments to build up, with older layers buried beneath younger layers. Fossils found in lower layers are deemed to be older than those in the upper layers, older on the bottom younger on the top. This is called relative age dating, the first step.

Next, evolutionary scientists then use index fossils to help establish the relative ages of rock layers that are not directly related to one another and their fossils.

Index fossils are distinct fossils, usually of an extinct organism found in only one or a few layers, though that layer or layers outcrops in many places—at least that's the theory.

They help establish and correlate the relative ages of rock layers. Index fossils typically have a short stratigraphic or vertical range. In reality, many index fossils occur above or below their expected ranges. In some cases, they turn up still alive today, but these can go unreported.

Evolutionists assume that the creature evolved somehow, lived for a certain time period, and then died out. Textbooks are correct when they state that relative dating provides no information whatsoever about a fossil's absolute age.

Nevertheless, most textbook writers and the scientists they rely on grew up with a belief in uniformitarian geologic processes. The principle of uniformity is a philosophy and an assumption that the slow geologic processes going on today must explain the deposits of the past.

They teach the motto, "the present is the key to the past." It's not. As any judge in court will attest, eyewitness records record the past more accurately. Also, keen observations in the field testify that the sediments comprising the ancient rock layers were laid down catastrophically, not slowly over millions of years.

Today, the geologic time scale shows ages based on radiometric age dating. Many textbook authors consider radiometric ages as absolute ages. However, as you will soon learn, these techniques stray far from absolute dates, though they may reveal relative ages of some rocks.

The Age of the Earth

Today's evolutionists base their age of the Earth on their interpretation of radioactive elements. They assign 4.5 billion years to earth based on the belief that earth itself evolved, so to speak, from a molten mass. But they cannot directly date the earth using selected isotopes because they believe all rocks have cycled over imagined eons, leaving no original rocks to test.

They assume meteorites formed when earth did. Researchers age-dated a meteorite to sometime around the age they would accept. Thus, the earth itself has no direct evidence for its vast evolutionary age assignment.

The various rock layers are given names with assigned ages (Check the Uniformitarian Geologic Time Scale figure below). Those who believe these ever-changing but always unimaginably old age assignments call each rock System a "Period."

The names help, but their age assignments derive from results chosen to agree with evolutionary time. To understand exactly why, we must first learn the basics of radioactive elements and of the techniques used when treating these systems of elements as clocks.

Many elements on the periodic table have radioactive forms. Stable atoms have a set number of protons, neutrons, and orbital electrons. Isotopes are atoms of the same elements with the same number of protons but different numbers of neutrons.

Some isotopes are radioactive and others are stable. A radioactive nucleus is not stable. It changes into another element by emitting particles and/or radiation.

Uniformitarian Geologic Time Scale

EON	ERA	PERIOD	EPOCH	Alleged Age Years	Young Earth Evidences
Phanerozoic This is where most fossils occur	Cenozoic	Quaternary	Holocene	10,000	
			Pleistocene	2,600,000	
		Tertiary	Pliocene	5,300,000	Soft Frog with bloody bone marrow
			Miocene	23,000,000	⇐ Salamander muscle
			Oligocene	30,900,000	
			Eocene	55,800,000	⇐ Young coal, Penguin feathers, Lizard skin
			Paleocene	65,500,000	
	Mesozoic	Cretaceous		145,500,000	⇐ Young Diamonds
		Jurassic		201,600,000	Young Coal
		Triassic		251,000,000	Dinosaur DNA, blood, blood vessels and protein
	Paleozoic	Permian		299,000,000	
		Pennsylvanian		318,000,000	⇐ Young Coal
		Mississippian		359,000,000	
		Devonian		416,000,000	
		Silurian		444,000,000	
		Ordovician		488,000,000	
		Cambrian		542,000,000	
	Precambrian	Proterozoic Eon			⇐ Helium in zircon crystals
		Archean Eon		2,500,000,000	
				3,850,000,000	

The time scale is placed vertically because older sedimentary deposits are buried beneath younger sedimentary deposits. The assumption of slow geologic processes and radiometric age dating has drastically inflated the age of the Earth and its strata.

A basic way to express the rate of radioactive decay is called the half-life. This equals the length of time needed for 50% of a quantity of radioactive material to decay.

Unstable radioactive isotopes called parent elements become stable elements called daughter elements. Each radioactive element has its own specific half-life (see the table below).

Radiometric Isotopes and Half-Lives

Examples of Radioactive Isotopes that Change into Stable Elements		
Radioactive Parent Element	Stable Daughter Element	Half-Life
Carbon-14 (^{14}C)	Nitrogen-14 (^{14}N)	5,730 Years
Potassium-40 (^{40}K)	Argon-40 (^{40}Ar)	1.3 Billion Years
Uranium-238 (^{238}U)	Lead-206 (^{206}Pb)	4.5 Billion Years
Rubidium-87 (^{87}Rb)	Strontium-87 (^{87}Sr)	48.6 Billion Years

Note: Carbon-14 is not used to date minerals or rocks, but is used for organic remains that contain carbon, such as wood, bone, or shells.

To estimate a radioisotope age of a crystalline rock, geologists measure the ratio between radioactive parent and stable daughter products in the rock.

They can even isolate isotopes from specific, crystallized minerals within a rock. They then use a model to convert the measured ratio into an age estimate.

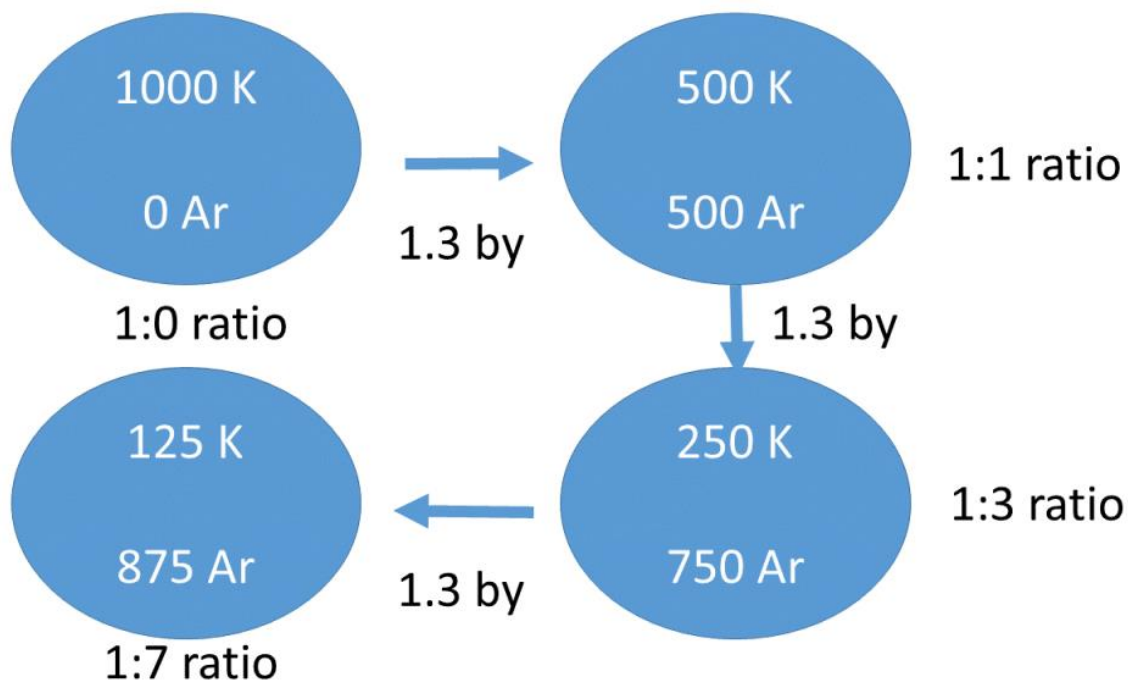
The models incorporate key assumptions, like the ratio of parent to daughter isotopes in the originally formed rock. How can anyone know this information? We can't. We must assume some starting condition. Evolutionists assume that as soon as a crystalline rock cooled from melt, it inherited no daughter product from the melt. This way, they can have their clock start at zero.

However, when they find isotope ratios that contradict other measurements or evolution, they often invoke inherited daughter product. This saves the desired age assignments.

Igneous (crystalline) rocks — those that have formed from molten magma or lava — are the primary rock types analyzed to determine radiometric ages. For example, let's assume that when an igneous rock solidified, a certain mineral in it contained 1,000 atoms of radioactive potassium (^{40}K) and zero atoms of argon (^{40}Ar). After one half-life of 1.3 billion years, the rock would contain 500 ^{40}K and 500 ^{40}Ar atoms, since 50% has decayed. This is a 500:500 or 500-parent:500-daughter ratio, which reduces to a 1:1 ratio.

If the sample contained this ratio, then the rock would be declared 1.3 billion years old. If the ratio is greater than 1:1, then not even one half-life has expired, so the rock would be younger. However, if the ratio is less than 1:1, then the rock is considered older than the half-life for that system.

Decay of Radioactive potassium-40 to argon-40



After three half-lives of this system, totaling 3.9 billion years, only 125 of the original 1000 radioactive potassium-40 atoms remain, assuming even decay for all that time.

Age-dating a rock requires at least these four basic assumptions:

- **Assumption #1: Laboratory measurements that have no human error or misjudgments.** Measuring the radioactive parent and stable daughter elements to obtain the ratio between them must be accurate, and it usually is. Keep in mind that most laboratory technicians believe in deep time. This sets the time periods they expect. They all memorized the geologic time scale long before they approached their research, and thus may not even consider that processes other than radioisotope decay may have produced the accurately measured isotope ratios.
- **Assumption #2: The rock began with zero daughter element isotopes.** Next, this technician assumes that all the radioactive parent isotopes began decaying right when the mineral crystallized from a melt. He also assumes none of the stable daughter element was present at this time. How can anyone really know the mineral began with 100% radioactive parent and 0% daughter elements? What if some stable daughter element was already present when the rock formed? After all, these experts often explain away unexpected radioisotope age results using the excuse that daughter or parent isotopes must have been present when the rock formed. Without knowledge of the starting condition, the use of isotopes as clocks means nothing.
- **Assumption #3: The rock maintained a “closed system.”** A closed system means that no extra parent or daughter elements have been added or removed throughout the history of the rock. Have

you ever seen an atom? Of course not. It is too small, but we must think about this on an atomic level. Decay by-products like argon and helium are both gases. Neither gas tends to attach to any other atom, meaning they rarely do chemistry. Instead of reacting with atoms in rock crystals, they build up in rock systems and can move in and out of the rocks. One leading expert in isotope geology states that most minerals do not even form in closed systems. A closed system would retain all the argon that radioactive potassium produces. He emphasizes that for a radioactive-determined date to be true, the mineral must be in a closed system. Is there any such thing as a closed system when speaking of rocks?

- **Assumption #4: The decay rate remained constant.** The constant-decay rate assumption assumes the decay rate remained the same throughout the history of the rock. Lab experiments have shown that most changes in temperature, pressure, and the chemical environment have very little effect on decay rates. These experiments have led researchers to have great confidence that this is a reasonable assumption, but it may not hold true. Is the following quote an overstatement of known science? “Radioactive transmutations must have gone on at the present rates under all the conditions that have existed on Earth in the geologic past.” A.O. Woodford, *Historical Geology*. (W.H. Freeman and Company, 1965): 191–220. Some scientists have found evidence that zircon crystals endured high levels of radioactive decay in the past, as discussed below. This evidence challenges assumption #4.

To illustrate how much radioisotope dating hinges on assumptions, imagine you encounter a burning candle sitting on a table. How long has that candle been burning? We can calculate the answer if we know the candle’s 'burn rate history' and 'original length'. However, if the original length is not known, or if it cannot be verified that the burning rate has been constant, it is impossible to tell for sure how long the candle was burning. A similar problem occurs with radiometric dating of rocks. Since the initial physical state of the rock is unknowable, workers must assume it.

Brand New Rocks Give Old “Ages”

Scientific literature omitted from public school textbooks reveal radioisotope age assignments much older than the known ages of many rocks. These results first arrived in the 1960s and 1970s, but most of the scientific community still pays no attention. Argon and helium isotopes were measured from recent basalt lava erupted on the deep ocean floor from the Kilauea volcano in Hawaii. Researchers calculated up to 22,000,000 years for brand new rocks![vi] The problem is common. The following table gives six examples among many more.

Young Volcanic Rocks with Really Old Whole-Rock K-Ar (Potassium-Argon) Model Ages.

Lava Flow, Rock Type, and Location	Year Formed or Known Age	^{40}K - ^{40}Ar “Age”
Kilauea Iki basalt, Hawaii	AD 1959	8,500,000 years
Volcanic bomb, Mt. Stromboli, Italy	AD 1963	2,400,000 years

Mt. Etna basalt, Sicily	AD 1964	700,000 years
Medicine Lake Highlands obsidian, Glass Mountains, California	<500 years	12,600,000 years
Hualalai basalt, Hawaii	AD 1800–1801	22,800,000 years
Mt. St. Helens dacite lava dome, Washington	AD 1986	350,000 years

The oldest real age of these recent volcanic rocks is less than 500 years. People witnessed and described the molten lava solidify into most of these rocks just decades ago. Many of these were only about 10 years old. And yet ^{40}K - ^{40}Ar dating gives ages from 350,000 to >22,800,000 years.

Potassium-Argon (^{40}K - ^{40}Ar) has been the most widespread method of radioactive age-dating for the Phanerozoic rocks, where most fossils occur. The misdated rocks shown above violate the initial condition assumption of no radiogenic argon (^{40}Ar) present when the igneous rock formed. There is too much ^{40}Ar present in recent lava flows. Thus, the method gives excessively old ages for recent rocks. The amounts of argon in these rocks indicate they carry isotope “ages” much, much older than their known ages. Could the argon they measured have come from a source other than radioactive potassium decay? If so, then geologists have been trusting a faulty method. If they can’t obtain correct values for rocks of known ages, then why should we trust the values they obtain for rocks of unknown ages?

These wrong radioisotope ages violate the initial condition assumption of zero (0%) parent argon present when the rock formed. Furthermore, the slow radioactive decay of ^{40}K shows that there was insufficient time since cooling for measurable amounts of ^{40}Ar to have accumulated in the rock. Therefore, radiogenic argon (^{40}Ar) was already present in the rocks as they formed.

Radiometric age dating should no longer be sold to the public as providing reliable, absolute ages. Excess argon invalidates the initial condition assumption for potassium dating, and excess helium invalidates the closed-system assumption for uranium dating. The ages shown on the uniformitarian geologic time scale should be removed.

“Young” Fossils in “Old” Mud

Researchers have scoured the Ono Formation near Redding in northern California and have described it in scientific publications for more than 140 years. Because the area has millions of fossils (including the valuable ammonites) and fossilized wood trapped in the same mudflow layers, it provides a unique opportunity for carbon dating. If the wood still has relatively short-lived radiocarbon inside it, then the age of the supposedly ancient fossils would need revision.

Geologist Andrew Snelling gathered four samples of ammonites and wood buried and fossilized together in this solidified mudstone and sent them to the IsoTrace Radiocarbon Laboratory at the University of Toronto, Canada for dating analysis. The following table summarizes the results.

Ono Formation Radiocarbon Dating Results.

Dating Results from Ammonites and Wood Fossils in the Ono Formation (Snelling, 2008)			
SPECIMEN	Rock layers	Ammonites	Wood
DATING	112 to 120 Million (conventional age)	36,400 to 48,710 carbon years.	32780 to 42390 carbon years.

Because the ammonites and wood fossils came from a rock unit conventionally regarded as 112 to 120 million years old, the fossils should share that same age. Such an age far exceeds the limit of the radioactive carbon (^{14}C) method, which in theory extends to artifacts less than 100,000 carbon years old. In other words, if these fossils are really over 100 million years old, then there should have been absolutely no measurable ^{14}C in them — but there was — enough to produce easily measurable ages of 32,000 to 48,000 years!

Scientists who believe in long ages assert that the ammonites and wood samples were contaminated with modern carbon in the ground, during sampling, or even in the laboratory. But this study took extensive steps to guard against such contamination. So how can 36,000 carbon-year-old ammonites and 32,000 carbon-year-old wood be stuck in a mudflow of 112 million or more conventional years? Two logical options present themselves:

Option 1: One of the three dates is correct and the other two are wrong.

Option 2: All three of the dates are wrong.

If Biblical history is accurate as we believe it is, then the second option is the correct choice — none of the dates are correct. The fact that measurable ^{14}C existed in the ammonites and wood fossils shows that they are very young — certainly not 112–120 million years old. But how can they still outdate the Biblical age of Creation of about 6,000 years? A number of factors help explain this. First, the Earth's stronger magnetic field in the recent past would have reduced the atmospheric ^{14}C production rate. Second, because the recent Genesis Flood removed so much carbon from the biosphere and buried it, the measured apparent radiocarbon ages are still much higher than the true ages of the fossil ammonites and wood.

Therefore, the true ages of the ammonites and wood are consistent with their burial during the Genesis Flood about 4,400 years ago. Back then, muddy waters washed sediments and ammonites onto land.

All these evidences show that we cannot trust radiometric dating for fossils of unknown ages as it has failed the test with fossils and rocks of known ages.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

DINOSAURS

Introduction

Dinosaurs were created by God on day six of creation, approximately 6,000 years ago. Dinosaurs were originally vegetarian. During the global flood, many were buried and fossilized, but two of each kind survived on Noah's ark. Dinosaurs eventually died out due to human activity, climate changes, or other factors.

When Did Dinosaurs Live?

Evolutionists claim dinosaurs lived millions of years ago. But it is important to realize that when they dig up a dinosaur bone, it does not have a label attached showing its date. The Bible states that God made the land animals, including dinosaurs, on day six (Genesis 1:24–25), so they date from around 6,000 years ago.

Types of Dinosaurs

Hypsilophodon foxii - *Hypsilophodon foxii* was one of the first dinosaurs discovered. This small, plant-eating animal was first discovered in 1849, a mere seven years after Sir Richard Owen coined the term dinosaur.

Tyrannosaurus rex - *Tyrannosaurus rex*, first described in 1905, this “tyrant lizard king” still holds the crown as the largest and most fearsome terrestrial predator ever discovered in North America. Since T. rex is found only in Flood deposits, our knowledge of this great animal is limited to his fossilized remains.

The sauropods - The sauropods (“lizard feet”) included the largest land animals in history. With fossils on every continent, sauropods are easily recognized by their extremely long necks and tails, which are anchored to a huge body and held up by towering legs.

Albertaceratops nesmoi - A newly uncovered dinosaur, *Albertaceratops nesmoi*, had horns about three-feet long (located right above its eyebrows). In the evolutionists' timeline, dinosaurs that were older than this one had larger horns, and the ones that followed had smaller horns. Hence, evolutionists say, this creature represents a middle step.

Dinosaurs and the Bible

As you add up all of the dates in the Bible, you'll come to the conclusion that the creation of the earth and animals, including the dinosaurs, occurred only thousands of years ago, not millions of years ago. Thus, if the Bible is right (and it is!), dinosaurs must have lived within the past few thousands of years.

Behemoth in the Bible

Two great creatures, Behemoth and Leviathan, are described by God in Job. Some commentators have suggested behemoth was an elephant or hippo, but the description simply doesn't match (e.g., behemoth "moves his "tail like a cedar"). It appears God is describing a sauropod dinosaur (Behemoth) and a fearsome now-extinct sea creature (Leviathan).

Leviathan in the Bible

Though technically not a dinosaur but rather a marine reptile that may have also been able to come up onto land (Job 41:25 and 30), Leviathan can correctly be called a "dragon" which includes terrestrial, aquatic, and aerial reptiles.

In the biblical book of Job, God challenges Job by questioning his ability to capture Leviathan and make it his servant (Job 41:1–4). Leviathan is not a creature that little children can play with (Job 41:5) and is too large for traders to sell (Job 41:6).

God reminds Job that if a man is even thinking of capturing Leviathan with harpoons or fishing spears, then he needs to consider the battle that will take place (Job 41:7–8). If he does engage in battle with Leviathan, it will be the first and only time. Leviathan cannot be subdued by any man: this is a false hope, as he "is laid low even at the sight of him" (Job 41:9).

Humans & Dinosaurs Together?

Biblical creationists believe that man and dinosaurs lived at the same time because God said that he created man and land animals on day six. There is historical evidence of dinosaurs and man living together, such as the petroglyph in Natural Bridges, Utah, legends and stories of dragons in Europe, and the dragon motif in China. But one striking artifact in Asia is the bas-relief picture of a dinosaur in the ruins of Angkor outside of Siem Reap, Cambodia.

Old-earth proponents often argue that if man and dinosaurs lived at the same time, their fossils should be found in the same layers. Biblical creationists believe that man and dinosaurs lived at the same time because God said that He created man and land animals on Day Six. So, why don't we find human fossils buried with dinosaur fossils?

It has long been stated by evolutionists that since human and dinosaur fossils are not found together, they did not coexist. Bodie Hodge takes issue with this fallacy. Those who do not believe the plain reading of

Genesis, such as many non-Christians and evolutionists believe the rock and fossil layers on earth represent millions of years of earth history and that man and dinosaurs did not live at the same time.

According to the evolutionary timeline, crocodiles have been around since the time of the dinosaurs—and yet, humans live with crocodiles today. So why is it ridiculous to think humans and dinosaurs lived at the same time?

Looking at the survival techniques at the time of the flood, you would expect larger animals with stronger muscles like dinosaurs to retreat to higher altitudes faster than humans and when fossilization took place, the organisms that were together were fossilized together. This is one of the main reasons why we don't find human and dinosaur fossils together.

Soft Tissue Found in Dinosaurs

The survival of soft tissue and DNA within dinosaur bones would be powerful evidence against a millions-of-years age for those fossils. The findings support the view that these dinosaurs lived only 4,300 years ago and were buried during the global Flood.

A team in England confirmed the existence of soft skin tissue, known as keratin, in fossilized lizard skin. A team in Sweden showed that collagen has survived in the fossilized bone of a mosasaur. Since the researchers believe these fossils are 50 to 70 million years old, they need to explain how fragile biological molecules can survive so long. Paleontologists uncovered a Velociraptor apparently embroiled in a fight to the death with a Protoceratops. The Velociraptor's hands were grabbing the head shield of the Protoceratops, while its sickle claw appears to be lodged deep into the body cavity. What explanations do secular scientists offer for such sudden burial and preservation? Such an event could only happen if there was quick fossilization in a catastrophe such as the worldwide Flood.

Also, Dr. Mary Schweitzer and her team caught the world's attention with a Science paper in 2005 that described intact blood vessels and red blood cells in a T. rex bone. But in fact, secular scientists have been reporting soft tissue in dinosaurs for decades in sometimes seldom-read technical literature.

Dinosaurs on Noah's Ark?

In Genesis 6:19–20, the Bible says that two of every sort of land vertebrate (seven or seven pairs of the “clean” animals) were brought by God to the ark. Therefore, dinosaurs (land vertebrates) were represented on the ark.

Although there are about 668 names of dinosaurs, there are perhaps only 55 different “kinds” of dinosaurs. Furthermore, not all dinosaurs were huge like the Brachiosaurus, and even those dinosaurs on the ark were probably “teenagers” or young adults.

Were Dinosaurs Dragons?

There are many ancient descriptions and images of dragons. Many of these descriptions and images are similar to drawings and depictions of how scientists believe dinosaurs would have looked.

Then God said, “Let the earth bring forth the living creature according to its kind: cattle and creeping thing and beast of the earth, each according to its kind”; and it was so. And God made the beast of the earth according to its kind, cattle according to its kind, and everything that creeps on the earth according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness. . . . So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female. . . . So the evening and the morning were the sixth day.” (Genesis 1:24–31)

Globally, there are many ancient descriptions and images of dragons. Interestingly, many of these descriptions and images are similar to drawings and depictions of how scientists believe dinosaurs would have looked. It makes sense: just as flood legends have a basis in a real event, dragon legends also have a basis in reality—that people saw animals they called “dragons.” Furthermore, God’s Word clearly teaches that all the land animals (which included what we call dinosaurs), along with Adam and Eve, were made on the sixth day of creation. Dinosaurs and humans lived together.

Now, secularists mock the idea that dragons (such as those mentioned in Psalm 91:13 and Isaiah 27:1) were real, and that they include dinosaurs. This is because it would mean dinosaurs once lived with people, and evolutionists are adamant in their religion that dinosaurs died out millions of years before humans supposedly evolved.

To believe dinosaurs lived with people would mean that evolution and its millions of years are not true.

Ancient historians and writers clearly believed creatures like dragons were real. They describe seeing them first hand—often in the context of other types of animals that still live today.

Are Birds Evolved Dinosaurs?

Evolutionists claim that birds evolved from Dinosaurs. The fossil record does not reveal an evolutionary progression in feather development, nor does it reveal transitional animals that are part bird and part dinosaur. No scientific observations have ever shown a way that dinosaurs could acquire the genetic information to make the dramatic changes that would have been necessary to evolve into birds.

Having a true bird appear in the fossil record before alleged feathered dinosaurs, no mechanism to change scales into feathers, no mechanism to change a reptilian respiratory system into an avian respiratory system, and no legitimate dinosaurs found with feathers are all good indications that dinosaurs didn’t turn into birds. The evidence is consistent with what the Bible teaches about birds being unique and created after their kinds.

Genesis is clear that God didn’t make birds from pre-existing dinosaurs. In fact, dinosaurs (land animals made on day six) came after winged creatures made on day five, according to the Bible. Both biblically and scientifically, chicken-eaters around the world can rest easy—they aren’t eating mutant dinosaurs.

Dinosaur Movies

Dinosaurs enthrall society, and many movies are produced to feed this fascination. But how much of these movies is fact and how much is evolutionary fiction?

Television programs, thousands of books, and countless hours of research by thousands of qualified scientists have been devoted to studying dinosaurs. Is there an answer to their “mystery”? Sadly, many of the materials produced on the topic of dinosaurs teach parents and children evolutionary ideas and lead them away from believing the Bible.

What Happened to the Dinosaurs?

After Noah’s flood, around 4,300 years ago, the remnant of the land animals, including dinosaurs, came off the ark and lived in the present world, along with people. Because of sin, the judgments of the curse in Eden and the flood of Noah’s day have greatly changed earth over the past 6,000 years. Post-flood climatic change, lack of food, disease, and man’s activities caused many types of animals to become extinct. The dinosaurs, like many other creatures, died out.

Conclusion: Dinosaurs as “Missionary Lizards”

As Christians, we can use dinosaurs as “missionary lizards.” We can take what is popular with the culture and show how God’s Word explains it better. For example, soft tissue, like blood vessels and red blood cells, has been found in dinosaur bones. This soft tissue could not last millions of years. The fossils confirm a young earth. We can use dinosaurs to help people trust the history of the Bible and also trust in the message of Jesus Christ that is also found in God’s Word.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

NOAH'S FLOOD AND CATASTROPHIC PLATE TECTONICS

How could a massive, global flood be triggered? Do plate tectonics provide a valid mechanism?

What Is Plate Tectonics?

The earth's thin rocky outer layer (3–45 mi [5–70 km] thick) is called “the crust.” On the continents it consists of sedimentary rock layers—some containing fossils and some folded and contorted—together with an underlying crystalline rocky basement of granites and metamorphosed sedimentary rocks. In places, the crystalline rocks are exposed at the earth's surface, usually as a result of erosion. Beneath the crust is what geologists call the mantle, which consists of dense, warm-to-hot (but solid) rock that extends to a depth of 1,800 mi (2,900 km). Below the mantle lies the earth's core, composed mostly of iron. All but the innermost part of the core is molten.

Investigations of the earth's surface have revealed that it has been divided globally by past geologic processes into what today is a mosaic of rigid blocks called “plates.” Observations indicate that these plates have moved large distances relative to one another in the past and that they are still moving very slowly today. The word “tectonics” has to do with earth movements; so the study of the movements and interactions among these plates is called “plate tectonics.” Because almost all the plate motions occurred in the past, plate tectonics is, strictly speaking, an interpretation, model, or theoretical description of what geologists envisage happened to these plates through earth's history.

The general principles of plate tectonics theory may be stated as follows: deformation occurs at the edges of the plates by three types of horizontal motion—extension (rifting or moving apart), transform faulting (horizontal slippage along a large fault line), and compression, mostly by subduction (one plate plunging beneath another).

Extension occurs where the seafloor is being pulled apart or split along rift zones, such as along the axes of the Mid-Atlantic Ridge and the East Pacific Rise. This is often called “seafloor spreading,” which occurs where two oceanic plates move away from each other horizontally, with new molten material from the mantle beneath rising between them to form new oceanic crust. Similar extensional splitting of a continental crustal plate can also occur, such as along the East African Rift Zone.

Transform faulting occurs where one plate is sliding horizontally past another, such as along the well-known San Andreas Fault of California. Compressional deformation occurs where two plates move toward one another. If an oceanic crustal plate is moving toward an adjacent continental crustal plate, then the former will usually subduct (plunge) beneath the latter. Examples are the Pacific and Cocos Plates that are subducting beneath Japan and South America, respectively. When two continental crustal plates collide, the compressional deformation usually crumples the rock in the collision zone to produce a mountain range. For example, the Indian-Australian Plate has collided with the Eurasian Plate to form the Himalayas.

History of Plate Tectonics

The idea that the continents had drifted apart was first suggested by a creationist, Antonio Snider. He observed from the statement in Genesis 1:9–10 about God’s gathering together the seas into one place that at that point in earth history there may have been only a single landmass. He also noticed the close fit of the coastlines of western Africa and eastern South America. So he proposed that the breakup of that supercontinent with subsequent horizontal movements of the new continents to their present positions occurred catastrophically during the Flood.

However, his theory went unnoticed, perhaps because Darwin’s book, which was published the same year, drew so much fanfare. The year 1859 was a bad year for attention to be given to any other new scientific theory, especially one that supported a biblical view of earth history. And it also didn’t help that Snider published his book in French.

It wasn’t until the early twentieth century that the theory of continental drift was acknowledged by the scientific community, through a book by Alfred Wegener, a German meteorologist. However, for almost 50 years the overwhelming majority of geologists spurned the theory, primarily because a handful of seismologists claimed the strength of the mantle rock was too high to allow continents to drift in the manner Wegener had proposed. Their estimates of mantle rock strength were derived from the way seismic waves behave as they traveled through the earth at that time.

For this half-century the majority of geologists maintained that continents were stationary, and they accused the handful of colleagues who promoted the drift concept of indulging in pseudo-scientific fantasy that violated basic principles of physics. Today that persuasion has been reversed—plate tectonics, incorporating continental drift, is the ruling perspective.

What caused such a dramatic about-face? Between 1962 and 1968 four main lines of independent experiments and measurements brought about the birth of the theory of plate tectonics:

1. Mapping of the topography of the seafloor using echo depth-sounders;
2. Measuring the magnetic field above the seafloor using magnetometers;
3. “Timing” of the north-south reversals of the earth’s magnetic field using the magnetic memory of continental rocks and their radioactive “ages;” and
4. Determining very accurately the location of earthquakes using a worldwide network of seismometers.

An important fifth line of evidence was the careful laboratory measurement of how mantle minerals deform under stress. This measurement can convincingly demonstrate that mantle rock can deform by large amounts on timescales longer than the few seconds typical of seismic oscillations.

Additionally, most geologists became rapidly convinced of plate tectonics theory because it elegantly and powerfully explained so many observations and lines of evidence:

1. The jigsaw puzzle fit of the continents (taking into account the continental shelves);
2. The correlation of fossils and fossil-bearing strata across the ocean basins (e.g., the coal beds of North America and Europe);

3. The mirror image zebra-striped pattern of magnetic reversals in the volcanic rocks of the seafloor parallel to the mid-ocean rift zones in the plates on either side of the zone, consistent with a moving apart of the plates (seafloor spreading);
4. The location of most of the world's earthquakes at the boundaries between the plates, consistent with earthquakes being caused by two plates moving relative to one another;
5. The existence of the deep seafloor trenches invariably located where earthquake activity suggests an oceanic plate is plunging into the mantle beneath another plate;
6. The oblique pattern of earthquakes adjacent to these trenches (subduction zones), consistent with an oblique path of motion of a subducting slab into the mantle;
7. The location of volcanic belts (e.g., the Pacific "ring of fire") adjacent to deep sea trenches and above subducting slabs, consistent with subducted sediments on the tops of down-going slabs encountering melting temperatures in the mantle; and
8. The location of mountain belts at or adjacent to convergent plate boundaries (where the plates are colliding).

Slow-and-Gradual or Catastrophic?

Because of the scientific community's commitment to the uniformitarian assumptions and framework for earth history, most geologists take for granted that the movement of the earth's plates has been slow and gradual over long eons. After all, if today's measured rates of plate drift—about 0.5–6 in (2–15 cm) per year—are extrapolated uniformly back into the past, it requires about 100 million years for the ocean basins and mountain ranges to form. And this rate of drift is consistent with the estimated 4.8 mi³ (20 km³) of molten magma that currently rises globally each year to create new oceanic crust.

On the other hand, many other observations are incompatible with slow-and-gradual plate tectonics. While the seafloor surface is relatively smooth, zebra-stripe magnetic patterns are obtained when the ship-towed instrument (magnetometer) observations average over mile-sized patches. Drilling into the oceanic crust of the mid-ocean ridges has also revealed that those smooth patterns are not present at depth in the actual rocks.⁷ Instead, the magnetic polarity changes rapidly and erratically down the drill-holes. This is contrary to what would be expected with slow-and-gradual formation of the new oceanic crust accompanied by slow magnetic reversals. But it is just what is expected with extremely rapid formation of new oceanic crust and rapid magnetic reversal during the flood, when rapid cooling of the new crust occurred in a highly nonuniform manner because of the chaotic interaction with ocean water.

Furthermore, slow-and-gradual subduction should have resulted in the sediments on the floors of the trenches being compressed, deformed, and thrust-faulted, yet the floors of the Peru-Chile and East Aleutian Trenches are covered with soft, flat-lying sediments devoid of compressional structures. These observations are consistent, however, with extremely rapid subduction during the Flood, followed by extremely slow plate velocities as the floodwaters retreated from the continents and filled the trenches with sediment.

If uniformitarian assumptions are discarded, however, and Snider's original biblical proposal for continental "sprint" during the Genesis Flood is adopted, then a catastrophic plate tectonics model explains everything that slow-and-gradual plate tectonics does, plus most everything it can't explain. Also,

a 3-D supercomputer model of processes in the earth's mantle has demonstrated that tectonic plate movements can indeed be rapid and catastrophic when a realistic deformation model for mantle rocks is included. And, even though it was developed by a creation scientist, this supercomputer 3-D plate tectonics modeling is acknowledged as the world's best.

The catastrophic plate tectonics model of Austin begins with a pre-Flood supercontinent surrounded by cold ocean-floor rocks that were denser than the warm mantle rock beneath. To initiate motion in the model, some sudden trigger "cracks" the ocean floors adjacent to the supercontinental crustal block, so that zones of cold ocean-floor rock start penetrating vertically into the upper mantle along the edge of most of the supercontinent.

These vertical segments of ocean-floor rock correspond to the leading edges of oceanic plates. These vertical zones begin to sink in conveyor-belt fashion into the mantle, dragging the rest of the ocean floor with them. The sinking slabs of ocean plates produce stresses in the surrounding mantle rock, and these stresses, in turn, cause the rock to become more deformable and allow the slabs to sink faster. This process causes the stress levels to increase and the rock to become even weaker. These regions of rock weakness expand to encompass the entire mantle and result in a catastrophic runaway of the oceanic slabs to the bottom of the mantle in a matter of a few weeks.

The energy for driving this catastrophe is the gravitational potential energy of the cold, dense rock overlying the less dense mantle beneath it at the beginning of the event. At its peak, this runaway instability allows the subduction rates of the plates to reach amazing speeds of feet-per-second. At the same time the pre-Flood seafloor was being catastrophically subducted into the mantle, the resultant tensional stress tore apart (rifted) the pre-Flood supercontinent. The key physics responsible for the runaway instability is the fact that mantle rocks weaken under stress, by factors of a billion or more, for the sorts of stress levels that can occur in a planet the size of the earth—a behavior verified by many laboratory experiments over the past forty years.

The rapidly sinking ocean-floor slabs forcibly displace the softer mantle rock into which they are subducted, which causes large-scale convectional flow throughout the entire mantle. The hot mantle rock displaced by these subducting slabs wells up elsewhere to complete the flow cycle, and in particular rises into the seafloor rift zones to form new ocean floor. Reaching the surface of the ocean floor, this hot mantle material vaporizes huge volumes of ocean water with which it comes into contact to produce a linear curtain of supersonic steam jets along the entire 43,500 miles (70,000 km) of the seafloor rift zones stretching around the globe (perhaps the "fountains of the great deep" of Genesis 7:11 and Genesis 8:2). These supersonic steam jets capture large amounts of liquid water as they "shoot" up through the ocean above the seafloor where they form. This water is catapulted high above the earth and then falls back to the surface as intense global rain ("and the floodgates of heaven were opened"). The rain persisted for "40 days and nights" (Genesis 7:11–12) until all the pre-Flood ocean floor had been subducted.

This catastrophic plate tectonics model for the Earth's history is able to explain geologic data that slow-and-gradual plate tectonics over many millions of years cannot. For example, the new rapidly formed ocean floor would have initially been very hot. Thus, being of lower density than the pre-Flood ocean floor, it would have risen some 3,300 ft. (1,000 m) higher than its predecessor, causing a dramatic rise in global sea level. The ocean waters would thus have swept up onto and over the continental land surfaces, carrying vast quantities of sediments and marine organisms with them to form the thick, fossiliferous

sedimentary rock layers we now find blanketing large portions of today's continents. This laterally extensive layer-cake sequence of sedimentary rocks is magnificently exposed, for example, in the Grand Canyon region of the southwestern U.S. Slow-and-gradual plate tectonics simply cannot account for such thick, laterally extensive sequences of sedimentary strata containing marine fossils over such vast interior continental areas—areas which are normally well above sea level.

Furthermore, the whole mantle convectional flow resulting from runaway subduction of the cold ocean-floor slabs would have suddenly cooled the mantle temperature at the core-mantle boundary, thus greatly accelerating convection in, and heat loss from, the adjacent outer core. This rapid cooling of the surface of the core would result in rapid reversals of the earth's magnetic field.

These magnetic reversals would have been expressed at the earth's surface and been recorded in the zebra-shaped magnetic stripes in the new ocean-floor rocks. This magnetization would have been erratic and locally patchy, laterally as well as at depth, unlike the pattern expected in the slow-and-gradual version. It was predicted that similar records of "astonishingly rapid" magnetic reversals ought to be present in thin continental lava flows, and such astonishingly rapid reversals in continental lava flows were subsequently found.

This catastrophic plate tectonics model thus provides a powerful explanation for how the cold, rigid crustal plates could have moved thousands of miles over the mantle while the ocean floor subducted. It predicts relatively little plate movement today because the continental "sprint" rapidly decelerated when all the pre-Flood ocean floor had been subducted.

Also, we would thus expect the trenches adjacent to the subduction zones today to be filled with undisturbed late-Flood and post-Flood sediments. The model provides a mechanism for the retreat of the floodwaters from off the continents into the new ocean basins, when at the close of the Flood, as plate movements almost stopped, the dominant tectonic forces resulted in vertical earth movements (Psalm 104:8). Plate interactions at plate boundaries during the cataclysm generated mountains, while cooling of the new ocean floor increased its density, which caused it to sink and thus deepen the new ocean basins to receive the retreating floodwaters.

Aspects of modeling the phenomenon of runaway behavior in the mantle have been independently duplicated and verified. The same modeling predicts that since runaway subduction of the cold ocean-floor slabs occurred only a few thousand years ago during the Flood, those cold slabs would not have had sufficient time since the catastrophe to be fully "digested" into the surrounding mantle. Evidence for these relatively cold slabs just above the core-mantle boundary, to which they would have sunk, therefore should still be evident today, and it is.

Moreover, whether at the current rate of movement—only 4 in (10 cm) per year—the force and energy of the collision between the Indian-Australian and Eurasian Plates could have been sufficient to push up the Himalayas (like two cars colliding, each only traveling at .04 in/h [1 mm/h]) is questionable. In contrast, if the plate movements were measured as feet-per-second, like two cars each traveling at 62 mph (100 km/h), the resulting catastrophic collision would have rapidly buckled rock strata to push up those high mountains.

Is Catastrophic Plate Tectonics Biblical?

The Bible does not directly mention either continental drift or plate tectonics. However, if the continents were once joined together, as suggested by Genesis 1:9–10, and are now apart, then the only possibility is continental division and “sprint” during the Flood. Some have suggested this continental division occurred after the Flood during the days of Peleg when “the earth was divided” (Genesis 10:25). However, this Hebrew expression can be also translated to mean “lands being divided among peoples,” which, according to the context, refers to the results of the Tower of Babel judgment. Furthermore, the destruction at the earth’s surface, where people and animals were then living during such a rapid continental “sprint,” would have been as utterly devastating as the Flood itself.

Therefore, using catastrophic plate tectonics as a model, mechanism, and framework to describe and understand the Genesis Flood event is far more reasonable and is also consistent with the Bible. Early skepticism about the slow-and-gradual plate tectonics model has largely evaporated because it has such vast explanatory power. When applied to the Flood, however, the catastrophic plate tectonics model not only explains those elements in a more consistent way, but it also provides a powerful explanation for the dramatic evidences of massive flooding and catastrophic geologic processes on the continents.

From the late eighteenth century to the present, most scientists, including creationists, rejected the Genesis Flood to explain the fossil-bearing portion of the geological record because it lacked an adequate mechanism to produce such a vast amount of geological change in such a short time. Only now are we beginning to understand at least part of the means God may have used to bring this world-destroying judgment to pass, including catastrophic plate tectonics.

Conclusion

Many creationist geologists now believe the catastrophic plate tectonics concept is very useful as the best explanation for how the Flood event occurred within the biblical framework for earth’s history. Even though the Bible does not specifically mention this concept, it is consistent with the biblical account, which implies an original supercontinent that broke up during the Flood, with the resultant continents obviously then having to move rapidly (“sprint”) into their present positions.

This concept is still rather new, and of course radical, but its explanatory power makes it compelling. Additional work is now being done to further detail this geologic model for the Flood event, especially to show that it provides a better explanation for the order and distribution of the fossils and strata globally than the failed slow-and-gradual belief. Of course, future discoveries may require adjustments in our thinking and understanding, but such is the nature of the human scientific enterprise. In contrast, “the word of the Lord endures forever” (1 Peter 1:25).

CHAPTER TWENTY- SEVEN

THE FLOOD, THE DARK AGES AND THE ROOTS OF EVOLUTION

Introduction

Why is it that with a world full of evidence, the story of the flood as found in the Bible is rejected by some of the brightest minds in the scientific community in general? I'll give you a clue. It has little to do with the evidence. The Bible gives us an explanation of history that the earth and all the life forms were created perfect and then it all changed because of sin. If that is true, why are so many scientists fully opposed to that point of view? The reason has more to do with worldview than it does with data. Leaving religious perspectives out of it doesn't solve that problem. Bias is not a religious problem, it is a human problem.

Science is defined as “a systematic enterprise that builds and organizes knowledge in the form of testable explanations and predictions about the universe.” The problem evolution has, is that it is not a testable explanation. Evolution necessitates that in some way, somehow, something that is not alive could by itself, create something that is alive. This mysterious event has not been observed anywhere in nature or in the laboratory and therefore it does not pass the scientific method. Therefore, it cannot be established as a scientific fact.

All life consists of DNA which is a very complex set of organized information. The reason why natural processes cannot and will never produce life is because natural processes do not create or organize information. Organization requires intelligence. And where we see the evidence of organization, we see the evidence of God. Therefore, the most supreme revelation the study of science and the natural world can ever grant mankind, is a discovery of the existence of the supernatural.

In spite of this, the pride of human bias and man's commitment to a Godless worldview still influences our courts and educational institutions which to this day, mandate by law, evolution be taught as an infallible fact.

In the present day, people have often asked, “Why is it that scientists seem to become more and more confident in their commitment to the worldview of evolution? Is it because scientists have got more data?” No. It really isn't. It is because there is an increase in confidence and an increased commitment to a worldview which is partly because of the political battles over what is going to be taught in public schools.

When they say that you have to teach evolution, then they are basically saying that every teacher has to be a liar because they have to proclaim that which is a theory of modern science, when there are better theories to explain what we see, and these are excluded. If they were to put them both before the students

as a matter of comparison and choice, that would be fair. But the way in which it is today belies comprehension. Modern curriculums don't talk about God in textbooks and articles. God is out of the picture. But what if God exists? This is no way to find truth.

So that's how a worldview can constrict things. One of the things to be appreciated about the Biblical worldview that Christians embrace is that it's liberating. We can't say that all reality is only that which we can see because there's nothing that tells us that that's all to reality. To eliminate bias, a broader approach is preferred, that which includes God in the possibilities and a look is taken at the scientific data which tends to point us towards God.

When you say, "Well no. I'm not going to get involved with religion or the Bible because that's not science," it shows that you're being unnecessarily restrictive and you are eliminating the possibility of you investigating that which might be true. But modern science has a certain appeal to the independence of the human mind and heart. Science is the realm of the human. This is what we've done, this is what we know; whereas religion, faith and Christianity is the realm of God.

The main impediment to accept the Biblical account of origins is the consequences of accepting it. Now the problem of bringing God into the discussion, is that it inevitably brings back in the question of moral accountability. And to say that there's morality in an evolutionary paradigm is to fool yourself. You can't have a Supreme Being and lower beings without defining that relationship somehow. And intuitively, we recognize that that's a moral law and we may not look very good examined in that light. Therefore, to escape the concept of judgment and moral accountability, there is a natural tendency to have the need to reject the Creator and consequently, things like the story of the Flood and the evidences that are still visible on the earth. These are things that maybe subconsciously at times, we're pretty happy to find an alternative explanation. We therefore become comfortable moving away from the idea of moral accountability.

Eliminating moral accountability meant rewriting the history of the world, and this is exactly what happened. A new worldview was adopted, in particular, a worldview that did not include the history of the Flood, thus trying to eliminate God's judgment and therefore any moral accountability. But how could such a dramatically different worldview catch on? Well, the perfect opportunity arose towards the end of the dark ages.

The Flood

If we look at the popular culture today, the Flood story is not one that's commonly accepted as literally true. And so it's easy to look at it and say, "Nobody believes that." Well, that sort of raises this question, "What about the last few thousand years?" And the answer is, everybody believed it. In fact, the universal Flood story has been noted time after time in cultures scattered around the world. Every culture seems to have the story of a flood in which they all drew some lessons from it. The lessons may vary here and there but they believed it. Examples are the Epic of Gilgamesh among the Babylonians and the story of Vishnu and the Great Deluge among the Hindus. So why don't we believe it now?

Students and scholars will sometimes ask how science came to the point of view that now denies miracles and even scientists passionately unwilling to believe in creation. To explain that, you have to go through a little history.

Our society has been subjected to a whole fabric of intellectual ideas set to undermine the history of the world, the Flood and the history of creation. From the Flood, the earth itself is a witness showing how its entire surface had been changed by a water-based catastrophe. This overwhelming evidence can't be erased or removed. So, in the minds of those that rejected the Flood story, it needed to be reinterpreted. And this is how it happened.

The Dark Ages and the Roots of Evolution

During the Middle Ages, some factors in the society were very autocratic, dogmatic and persecutive and this made life very hard for people. And the agencies that were doing this were the government and the Church (The Roman Catholic Church).

One of the greatest things that man wants to have over fellow men is power. In the Middle Ages, the church ruled the world. So, during the dark ages in the medieval time period, for 1500 years, you had this nearly monolithic universal rule of the Catholic Church throughout Europe. One of the arenas of conflict in the developing new freedom of thought with the existing structures of the Catholic Church over the last 1500 years was the area of science. And the stories are fairly well known of all these scientists from Galileo Galilei and Isaac Newton to Nicolaus Copernicus and Francis Bacon who came into conflict with the church. Probably Galileo is the one that is most famous. He promoted the heliocentric planetary model which meant that the Sun was at the center and all the planets were revolving around it. The church didn't like that for a variety of philosophical reasons. To have the earth at the center was important philosophically and therefore Galileo's idea wasn't popular. So, he was called up by the inquisition, placed under house arrest, threatened with serious punishment and possibly death. We use that story now, unfortunately, many times, to create an unworkable antagonism between Christianity and Science. And that's not what's ought to be learned from that lesson, because, when we look at the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church through the dark ages, in many cases, it's not what the Bible says.

The world had been subjected to a very rigid religious thinking and anything that was slightly out of that tight box was regarded contradictory to truth, God, and the Bible and had to be eradicated by force, by the inquisition, and by death penalties in most cases. And it came finally to a point in history where the people were tired of that. They were weary of it and the church was losing its credibility because of the way they had treated people. The people were tired of the way governments had treated them and this led to a movement among scholars to move away from authority and from any of these autocratic agencies. The view of God was one of this wrathful deity who was lurking in the woods waiting for the transgressor to put a foot wrong. And the kings ruled, not out of love but out of greed, controlled not out of love, but out of fear, including the church.

In seeing the abusive power that had prevailed over Europe for 1500 years, they utterly rejected the Catholic Church, which of course, in their minds, meant that they utterly rejected Christianity. So that gave rise to a more atheistic minded society. And the mindset of man says, "Well, what was this restrictive force? The restrictive force to any mind expansion was God and therefore, let us get rid of Him.

Let us get rid of God so that we can grow *intellectually*.” And that's what they did in the French Revolution. Instead of holding the masses in blind submission to her dogmas, Rome's work resulted in making them infidels and revolutionists. They regarded her greed and cruelty as the fruit of the Bible and they would have none of it. Rome had misinterpreted the character of God and now men rejected both the Bible and its Author. This led to the French Revolution and ultimately, the complete removal of the church's power that it had maintained over the people for more than a thousand years. In the French National Assembly, the mob of revolutionaries declared only reason should be worshiped. They revealed a beautiful woman adorned in blue drapery and proclaimed her the goddess of reason. And they enshrined the goddess of reason. And reason took the place of faith in God.

They carried this woman on a car to Notre Dame, destroyed the church and preached atheism to the masses inside the church every week. The French people responded to the many centuries of Roman Catholic oppression and persecution by establishing a new form of government. Instead of a nation with a Christian worldview, howbeit, perverted and ruled by the Catholic Church at the time, a Society was formed with an atheistic worldview, absent of any Christian influence, and this was called “The Age of Enlightenment.”

They didn't want to have anything else to do with God. They saw that God was tyrannical. People were forced to believe and so now they sought to remove God from the equation altogether. And that's what happened in the French Revolution. People moved from a God-centred environment to a reason-based environment.

Atheism arose tremendously in France. Bibles were burned and destroyed and they called it “The Age of Enlightenment.” And so we see this idea of enlightenment, totally removing God from the picture. Out of all the segments of French society, it was the Catholic priests who suffered the highest per Capita mortality rate. There was a lot of animosity and they took it out on the church. And in most cases that means they took it out on Christianity.

In an effort to defend science and reason as the new ideals for society, the atheistic endeavor went about to de-Christianize France in what became known as the “Reign of Terror.” Priests were imprisoned or executed. Churches and religious monuments were vandalized or destroyed. The word 'Saint' was removed from street signs. The worship of a deity was forbidden. Bibles were burned publicly and the rallying cry of the French infidels was “crush the wretch,” referring to Christ in the form of His Church. Christians became the objects of public hatred. Many were shot dead while on their knees in prayer and their bodies left where they fell at their places of worship. In the forests where Christians gathered, bodies hung from trees and scattered the ground everywhere. All this was the result of the atheistic movement called “The Great Enlightenment” and those who thought to dethrone the Catholic Church for its centuries of torture and bloodshed were now themselves guilty of the same crimes.

The culminating events coming out of the enlightenment and then up to the French Revolution seemed to indicate the death of Christianity. All these was as Satan would have it. His policy is deception and his purpose is to bring wretchedness upon men, to deface the workmanship of God, to mar the divine purpose of love and to thus cause grief in Heaven.

Then by his deceptive arts, he leads men to throw the blame on God as if all this misery were the result of the Creator's plan. When the people found Romanism to be a deception, he urged them to regard all religion as a cheat and the Bible as a fable.

People were moving away from their confidence in governments and in the church and wanted to think for themselves and bring out more human freedom. This freedom went in many different directions including moving away from the belief in God.

The new generation of earth science individuals, most notably Lyell and Darwin came forth in the 1800's. Charles Lyell was a geologist who for the first time introduced the concept of long periods of time in the development of geological features and then he wrote, "The Principles of Geology."

These geological views Lyell espoused in his book became known as uniformitarianism. Uniformitarianism is the belief that things as they unfold and happen today were no different from what they were in the past. So if something takes a very long time to develop today, it must have taken a very long time in the past. Uniformitarianism is the basis for believing in the millions of years of time so critical to the theory of evolution. The widespread acceptance of the principle behind uniformitarianism was foretold in the Bible to be one of the prevailing reasons why people at the end of time would deny both creation and the global Flood.

"Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" 2 Peter 3:3-4.

This is what uniformitarianism teaches, that all things have continued at the same rate since the beginning.

But what if there is a catastrophe? What if you have a storm and all of the material that uniformitarianism said would eventually disappear after a long time, disappears instantly? This is what we see today.

The view that things have remained the same since the beginning of creation, is a philosophy God warned would characterize a belief system in the last days, and as the Bible says, this mindset would lead people to be "willingly ignorant of" the fact that "the world that then was, being overflowed with water perished" (2 Peter 3:5,6). The prophecy says they will be "willingly ignorant," meaning they would be unwilling to consider any evidence for the Flood. This is exactly how Charles Lyell described his own views.

Lyell wrote regarding fossils saying: "we cannot account for their present position by the universal deluge. I hold in utter abomination, most learned Academicians! Those systems which are built with their foundation in the air cannot be propped up without a miracle." Principles of Geology, 1840, Vol.1, 6th Edition. Pg 65.

As a naturalist, Charles Lyell rejected all miracles as an explanation. But it was not his observations in science that led him to this conclusion. It was his commitment to his own worldview. He revealed his bias against the Biblical Flood story when, in a letter, he wrote that these views of geological ages will "free science from Moses." Charles Lyell, June 14th, 1803 (Letter to George P. Scrope [Lyell, 1881, 1:268-271])

These ideas were then passed from Charles Lyell, to the young 22 year old seminary student, Charles Darwin.

When Charles Darwin was commissioned to travel on the Beagle, one of the books he took with him was Charles Lyell's book on "Principles of Geology." And here he was reading this information, and he comes to the Galapagos Islands and he sees finches which were of such a broad variety. So, the idea comes that obviously these finches must have evolved from a pair that happened to get to the islands and all the varieties evolved thereafter. And then, these geological ideas fit in, that this must have taken time. And Lyell's ideas start kicking in. He therefore says, if this variety that I see here developed over time and change took place by natural selection, then God did not create.

Darwin took the ideas of long ages of time that Lyell applied to geology, and then applied them to biology. Then he had given biological evolution something it didn't previously have — a scientific method by which to operate. Darwin came up with this new theory, the idea of natural selection, and that was kind of the magic bullet of the day. That's what gave plausibility, that now they had found a mechanism that can account for this change over long periods of time.

Darwin later became close friends with Lyell, and it's been said by some that he was the most influential person in Darwin's life. Darwin commented on Lyell's view about the Flood and said, "Lyell is most firmly convinced that he has shaken the faith in the Deluge far more efficiently by never having said a word against the Bible, than if he had acted otherwise." Charles Lyell, October 21, 1873 (Letter to George H. Darwin)

In the middle of the 19th Century, things started changing. Towards the end of that century, the scientific community started excluding God from its interpretations. Now God had been expelled from the explanatory menu of the scientific community.

"God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions." Ecclesiastes 7:29.

The theory of evolution has become the foundation of our global society today, and the catastrophic results of such a belief can be seen everywhere in the denial of moral accountability, the denial of God and therefore the denial of the Holy Scriptures. But perhaps more than any other belief, evolution has pushed our society closer to the magnitude of the wickedness that existed in the days of Noah.

"And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Genesis 6:5.

Wickedness and evil is how God defined the thoughts of man before the Flood. This is all the more applicable to us when we consider what the Bible has to say about the thoughts of the wicked. "The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts." Psalms 10:4.

When the Bible says that God is not in all his thoughts, what is really being said is that God is not in any of his thoughts. The wickedness that was great in the earth in the days of Noah was a Godless society that did not seek after God or think of Him. With this in mind, we can see a direct fulfillment in Jesus' prophecy, that as it was in the days of Noah "so shall it also be in the days of the coming of the Son of man."

If you believe in evolution, that means you deny the infallibility and the inerrancy of the Scriptures and ultimately you'll deny the judgment. Just as God saw the wickedness of man in the days of Noah and destroyed the world with a flood, so will He do the same when Christ comes the second time. It is my plea dear reader that you choose wisely concerning these matters.

“I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that thou and thy seed may live.” Deuteronomy 30:19.

EPILOGUE

By Elizabeth Bosibori and Edwin Marube

“In all that has been studied and chronicled, the author brings forth a clear elaboration of the issue of time and its history to our present. What if the world in its current economic crisis is just a smoke screen for something looming ahead that’s large in its sphere and terrible in its occurrence? What if despite race, nationality, gender, religion et cetera, the world is heading (being driven) to a global issue based on worship that is to be hidden under a regalia of ‘saving the economy / climate change?’ Do you want to know The Truth? Have you ever asked yourself what is Truth? How can we ascertain information is true?

“Truth is more than just discoveries in the fields of learning (Science, Mathematics etc.); truth is more and understood better through discovery but given through revelation. Discovery in this context then becomes a tool to understand the progressive light that truth reveals. I say this because if truth could only be arrived at by discovery and not revelation, then it would cease to be greater than the human mind, for it would mean that by debate and logic only, it could be established. But the fact that the mind of the human seeker is tasked and taxed to study more to discover truth reveals that it is greater than the student. This again proves that it can only be contained in the human mind but cannot be limited by it. Therefore, every branch of learning simply adds clarity to its own spectrums that have been dimmed to the human eye by error or ignorance. Why should you learn the truth? Because it is only truth that can enlighten and empower the human mind simultaneously and because truth is the only measure against which error is to be tested. Truth is found in the Holy Scriptures whereas all discoveries along the lines of science, history, religious education, philosophy et cetera, give more umph and impetus to the momentum of Truth’s movement onward, forward and upward. Such discoveries have been excellently chronicled down in this book.

“The issue of The Bible’s credibility has been put to the weighing scales of human judgment over and over again especially in our postmodern world. The standard has been ‘higher learning’ against which Scripture has been measured against. But lo! As archeologists and scientists discover fossils of enormous past creatures, extinct flora and fauna, and gigantic humans that once existed, many candid thinkers like Dr. Carl Baugh, Walter T. Brown and Prof. Walter Veith are led to a full conviction that the Bible is scientifically accurate! Many still cling to logic and ‘science’ and try to divorce them from Scripture. The result is multitudes becoming disillusioned with religion and science altogether and such swing into the extreme end of the pendulum of liberalism. Science has proven to have had its source from a place (or Being) of omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence discernible via the operating laws of science. The author does a stellar job in bringing out the clarity of God’s operations.” – **Edwin Marube.**

“Today, we can see that the world has gone through many changes. We can not compare the present world to a period 100 years ago. As we struggle with the origins issue, many people have come up with explanations of how this world came to existence. Scientists being at the forefront have a quite elaborate theory. History itself tries to bring light to this matter but the light shone upon us through the Bible is quite interesting and reliable. These three disciplines (History, Science and the Bible) are actually related and their encoded puzzle with its stimulating interconnection is decoded by carefully examining the words of the Scripture. Looking at the origins of the Bible from just thousands of years ago, its

chronology matches the history of the World and great evidences all around the globe prove the events written therein. This book unravels the interdisciplinary interrelationships between history, science and the Bible and goes deep into the world of science to provide great evidences to prove the validity and inerrancy of the Bible.” - **Elizabeth Bosibori.**

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